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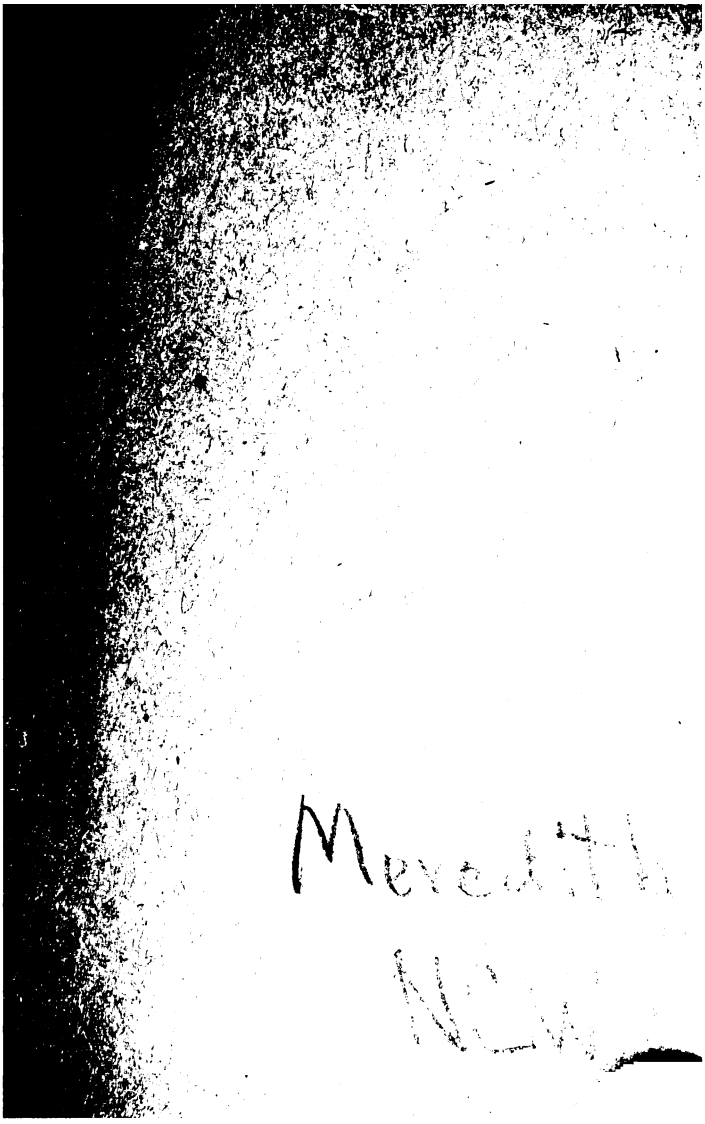
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GEORGE MEREDITH.

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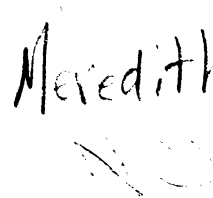

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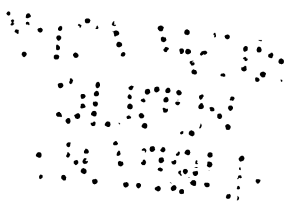

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LORD ORMONT AND HIS AMINTA.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE AT A SCHOOL.

A PROCESSION of schoolboys having to meet a procession of schoolgirls on the Sunday's dead march, called a walk, round the park, could hardly go by without dropping to a hum in its chatter, and the shot of incurious half-eyes at the petticoated creatures—all so much of a swarm unless you stare at them like lanterns. The boys cast a glance because it relieved their heaviness; things were lumpish and gloomy that day of the week. The girls, who sped their peep of inquisition before the moment of transit, let it be seen that they had minds occupied with thoughts of their own.

Our gallant fellows forgot the intrusion of the

foreign body as soon as it had passed. A sarcastic discharge was jerked by chance at the usher and the governess—at the old game, it seemed; or why did they keep steering the columns to meet? There was no fun in meeting; and it would never be happening every other Sunday, and oftener, by sheer toss-penny accident. They were moved like pieces for the pleasure of these two.

Sometimes the meeting occurred twice during the stupid march-out, when it became so nearly vexatious to boys almost biliously oppressed by the tedium of a day merely allowing them to shove the legs along, ironically naming it animal exercise, that some among them pronounced the sham variation of monotony to be a bothering nuisance if it was going to happen every Sunday, though Sunday required diversions. They hated the absurdity in this meeting and meeting; for they were obliged to anticipate it, as a part of their ignominious weekly performance; and they could not avoid reflecting on it, as a thing done over again: it had them in front and in rear; and it was a kind of broadside mirror, flashing at them the exact opposite of themselves in an identically similar situation, that forced a resemblance.

Touching the old game, Cuper's fold was a

healthy school, owing to the good lead of the head boy, Matey Weyburn, a lad with a heart for games to bring renown, and no thought about girls. His emulation, the fellows fancied, was for getting the school into a journal of the Sports. He used to read one sent him by a sporting officer of his name, and talk enviously of public schools, printed whatever they did—a privilege and dignity of which they had unrivalled enjoyment in the past days, when wealth was more jealously exclusive; and he was always prompting for challenges and saving up to pay expenses; and the fellows were to laugh at kicks and learn the art of self-defence—train to rejoice in whipcord muscles. The son of a tradesman, if a boy fell under the imputation, was worthy of honour with him, let the fellow but show grip and toughness. He loathed a skulker, and his face was known for any boy who would own to fatigue or confess himself beaten. "Go to bed," was one of his terrible stings. Matey was good at lessons, too—liked them; liked Latin and Greek; would help a poor stumbler.

Where he did such good work was in sharpening the fellows to excel. He kept them to the grindstone, so that they had no time for rusty brooding; and it was not done by exhortations off a pedestal, like St. Paul at the Athenians, it breathed

out of him every day of the week. He carried a light for followers. Whatever he demanded of them, he himself did it easily. He would say to boys, "You're going to be men," meaning something better than women. There was a notion that Matey despised girls. Consequently, never much esteemed, they were in disfavour. The old game was mentioned only because of a tradition of an usher and governess leering sick eyes until they slunk away round a corner and married, and set up a school for themselves—an emasculate ending. Comment on it came of a design to show that the whole game had been examined and dismissed as uninteresting and profitless.

One of the boys alluded in Matey's presence to their general view upon the part played by womankind on the human stage, confident of a backing; and he had it, in a way: their noble chief whisked the subject, as not worth a discussion; but he turned to a younger chap, who said he detested girls, and asked him how about a sister at home; and the youngster coloured, and Matey took him and spun him round, with a friendly tap on the shoulder.

Odd remarks at intervals caused it to be suspected that he had ideas concerning girls. They were high as his head above the school; and there

they were left, with Algebra and Homer, for they were not of a sort to inflame; until the boys noticed how he gave up speaking, and fell to hard looking, on the march past Miss Vincent's young ladies. A well-grown girl (calling herself young lady) made usually the left of the second couple from the front of the line of bonnets, and was by consent good-looking, though she was dark enough to get herself named Browny. In the absence of a fair girl of equal height to set beside her, Browny shone.

She had a nice mouth, ready for a smile at the corners; or so it was before Matey let her see that she was his mark. Now she kept her mouth asleep and her eyes half down, up to the moment of her nearing to pass, when the girl opened on him, as if lifting her eyelids from sleep to the window, a full side-look, like a throb, and no disguise—no slyness or boldness either, not a bit of languishing. You might think her heart came quietly out.

The look was like the fall of light on the hills from the first of morning. It lasted half a minute, and left a ruffle for a good half-hour. Even the younger fellows, without knowing what affected them, were moved by the new picture of a girl, as if it had been a frontispiece of a romantic story some day to be read. She looked compelled to look, but

consenting and unashamed; at home in submission; just the look that wins observant boys, shrewd as dogs to read by signs, if they are interested in the persons. They read Browny's meaning: that Matey had only to come and snatch her; he was her master, and she was a brave girl, ready to go all over the world with him; had taken to him as he to her, shot for shot. Her taking to the pick of the school was a capital proof that she was of the right sort. To be sure, she could not much help herself.

Some of the boys regretted her not being fair. But, as they felt, and sought to explain, in the manner of the wag of a tail, with elbows and eyebrows to one another's understanding, fair girls could never have let fly such a look; fair girls are softer, woollier, and when they mean to look serious, overdo it by craping solemn; or they pinafore a jigging eagerness, or hoist propriety on a chubby flaxen grin; or else they dart an eye, or they mince and prim and pout, and are sigh-away and dying-ducky, given to girls' tricks. Browny, after all, was the girl for Matey.

She won a victory right away and out of hand, on behalf of her cloud-and-moon sisters, as against the sunny-meadowy; for slanting intermediates are

not espied of boys in anything: conquered by Browny, they went over to her colour, equal to arguing, that Venus at her mightiest must have been dark, or she would not have stood a comparison with the forest Goddess of the Crescent, swanning it through a lake —on the leap for the run of the chase—watching the dart, with her humming bow at breast. The fair are simple sugary things, prone to fat, like bread-sops in milk; but the others are milky nuts, good to bite, Lacedæmonian virgins, hard to beat, putting us on our mettle; and they are for heroes, and they can be brave. So these boys felt, conquered by Browny. A sneaking native taste for the forsaken side, known to renegades, hauled at them if her image waned during the week; and it waned a little, but Sunday restored and stamped it.

By a sudden turn the whole upper-school had fallen to thinking of girls, and the meeting on the Sunday was a prospect. One of the day-boarders had a sister in the seminary of Miss Vincent. He was plied to obtain information concerning Browny's name and her parents. He had it pat to hand in answer. No parents came to see her; an aunt came now and then. Her aunt's name was not wanted. Browny's name was Aminta Farrell.

Farrell might pass; Aminta was debated. This

female Christian name had a foreign twang; it gave dissatisfaction. Boy after boy had a try at it, with the same effect: you could not speak the name without a pursing of the mouth and a puckering of the nose, beastly to see, as one little fellow reminded them on a day when Matey was in more than common favour, topping a pitch of rapture, for clean bowling, first ball, middle stump on the kick, the best bat of the other eleven in a match; and, says this youngster, drawling, soon after the cheers and claps had subsided to business, "Aminta."

He made it funny by saying it as if to himself and the ground, in a subdued way, while he swung his leg on a half-circle, like a skater, hands in pockets. He was a sly young rascal, innocently precocious enough, and he meant no disrespect either to Browny or to Matey; but he had to run for it, his delivery of the name being so like what was in the breasts of the senior fellows, as to the inferiority of any Aminta to old Matey, that he set them laughing; and Browny was on the field, to reprove them, left of the tea-booth, with her school-mates, part of her head under a scarlet parasol.

A girl with such a name as Aminta might not be exactly up to the standard of old Matey, still, if he thought her so and she had spirit, the school

was bound to subscribe; and that look of hers warranted her for taking her share in the story, like the brigand's wife loading guns for him while he knocks over the foremost carabineer on the mountain-ledge below, who drops on his back with a hellish expression.

Browny was then clearly seen all round, instead of only front-face, as on the Sunday in the park, when fellows could not spy backward after passing. The pleasure they had in seeing her all round involved no fresh stores of observation, for none could tell how she tied her back-hair, which was the question put to them by a cynic of a boy, said to be queasy with excess of sisters. They could tell that she was tall for a girl, or tallish—not a maypole. She drank a cup of tea, and ate a slice of bread-and-butter; no cake.

She appeared undisturbed when Matey, wearing his holiday white ducks, and all aglow, entered the booth. She was not expected to faint, only she stood for the foreign Aminta more than for their familiar Browny in his presence. Not a sign of the look which had fired the school did she throw at him. Change the colour and you might compare her to a lobster fixed on end, with a chin and no eyes. Matey talked to Miss Vincent up to the in-

stant of his running to bat. She would have liked to guess how he knew she had a brother on the medical staff of one of the regiments in India: she asked him twice, and his cheeks were redder than cricket in the sun. He said he read all the reports from India, and asked her whether she did not admire Lord Ormont, our general of cavalry, whose charge at the head of fifteen hundred horse in the last great battle shattered the enemy's right wing, and gave us the victory—rolled him up and stretched him out like a carpet for dusting. Miss Vincent exclaimed that it was really strange, now, he should speak of Lord Ormont, for she had been speaking of him herself in the morning to one of her young ladies, whose mind was bent on his heroical deeds. Matey turned his face to the group of young ladies, quite pleased that one of them loved his hero; and he met a smile here and there—not from Miss Aminta Farrell. She was a complete disappointment to the boys that day. "Aminta" was mouthed at any allusion to her.

So, she not being a match for Matey, they let her drop. The flush that had swept across the school withered to a dry recollection, except when on one of their Sunday afternoons she fanned the desert. Lord Ormont became the subject of inquiry

and conversation; and for his own sake—not altogether to gratify Matey. The Saturday autumn evening's walk home, after the race out to tea at a distant village, too late in the year for cricket, too early for regular football, suited Matey, going at long strides, for the story of his hero's adventures; and it was nicer than talk about girls, and puzzling. Here lay a clear field; for he had the right to speak of a cavalry officer: his father died of wounds in the service, and Matey naturally intended to join the Dragoons; if he could get enough money to pay for mess, he said, laughing. Lord Ormont was his pattern of a warrior. We had in him a lord who cast off luxury to live like a Spartan when under arms, with a passion to serve his country and sustain the glory of our military annals. He revived respect for the noble class in the hearts of Englishmen. He was as good an authority on horseflesh as any Englishman alive; the best for the management of cavalry: there never was a better cavalry leader. The boys had come to know that Browny admired Lord Ormont, so they saw a double reason why Matey should; and walking home at his grand swing in the October dusk, their school hero drew their national hero closer to them.

Every fellow present was dead against the usher,

Mr. Shalders, when he took advantage of a pause to strike in with his "Murat!"

He harped on Murat whenever he had a chance. Now he did it for the purpose of casting eclipse upon Major-General Lord Ormont, the son and grandson of English earls; for he was an earl by his title, and Murat was the son of an innkeeper. Shalders had to admit that Murat might have served in the stables when a boy. Honour to Murat, of course, for climbing the peaks! Shalders, too, might interest himself in military affairs and Murat; he did no harm, and he could be amusing. It rather added to his amount of dignity. It was rather absurd, at the same time, for an English usher to be spouting and glowing about a French General, who had been a stables-boy and became a king, with his Murat this, Murat that, and hurrah Murat in red and white and green uniform, tunic and breeches, and a chimney-afire of feathers; and how the giant he was charged at the head of ten thousand horse, all going like a cataract under a rainbow over the rocks, right into the middle of the enemy and through; and he a spark ahead, and the enemy streaming on all sides flat away, as you see puffed smoke and flame of a bonfire. That was fun to set boys jigging. No wonder how in Russia the Cossacks feared him, and

scampered from the shadow of his plumes—were clouds flying off his breath! That was a fine warm picture for the boys on late autumn or early winter evenings, Shalders warming his back at the grate, describing bivouacs in the snow. They liked well enough to hear him when he was not opposing Matey and Lord Ormont. He perked on his toes, and fetched his hand from behind him to flourish it when his Murat came out. The speaking of the name clapped him on horseback—the only horseback he ever knew. He was as fond of giving out the name Murat as you see in old engravings of tobacco-shops men enjoying the emission of their whiff of smoke.

Matey was not inclined to class Lord Ormont alongside Murat, a first-rate horseman and an eagle-eye, as Shalders rightly said; and Matey agreed that forty thousand cavalry under your orders is a toss above fifteen hundred; but the claim for a Frenchman of a superlative merit to swallow and make nothing of the mention of our best cavalry generals irritated him to call Murat a mountebank.

Shalders retorted, that Lord Ormont was a reprobate.

Matey hoped he would some day write us an essay on the morals of illustrious generals of cavalry;

and Shalders told him he did not advance his case by talking nonsense.

Each then repeated to the boys a famous exploit of his hero. Their verdict was favourable to Lord Ormont. Our English General learnt riding before he was ten years old, on the Pampas, where you ride all day, and cook your steak for your dinner between your seat and your saddle. He rode with his father and his uncle, Muncastle, the famous traveller, into Paraguay. He saw fighting before he was twelve. Before he was twenty he was learning outpost duty in the Austrian frontier cavalry. He served in the Peninsula, served in Canada, served in India, volunteered for any chance of distinction. No need to say much of his mastering the picked Indian swordsmen in single combat: he knew their trick, and was quick to save his reins when they made a dash threatening the headstroke—about the same as disabling sails in old naval engagements.

That was the part for the officer; we are speaking of the General. For that matter, he had as keen an eye for the field and the moment for his arm to strike as any Murat. One would have liked to see Murat matched against the sabre of a wily Rajpoot! As to campaigns and strategy, Lord Ormont's head was a map. What of Murat and Lord Ormont horse

to horse and sword to sword? Come, imagine that, if you are for comparisons. And if Lord Ormont never headed a lot of thousands, it does not prove he was unable. Lord Ormont was as big as Murat. More, he was a Christian to his horses. How about Murat in that respect? Lord Ormont cared for his men: did Murat so particularly much? And he was as cunning fronting odds, and a thunderbolt at the charge. Why speak of him in the past? He is an English lord, a lord by birth, and he is alive; things may be expected of him to-morrow or next day.

Shalders here cut Matey short by meanly objecting to that.

"Men are mortal," he said, with a lot of pretended stuff, deploring our human condition in the elegy strain; and he fell to reckoning the English hero's age—as that he, Lord Ormont, had been a name in the world for the last twenty-five years or more. The noble lord could be no chicken. We are justified in calculating, by the course of nature, that his term of activity is approaching, or has approached, or, in fact, has drawn to its close.

"If your estimate, sir, approaches to correctness," rejoined Matey—tellingly, his comrades thought.

"Sixty, as you may learn some day, is a serious age, Matthew Weyburn."

Matey said he should be happy to reach it with half the honours Lord Ormont had won.

"Excepting the duels," Shalders had the impudence to say.

"If the cause is a good one!" cried Matey.

"The cause, or Lord Ormont has been maligned, was reprehensible in the extremest degree." Shalders cockhorsed on his heels to his toes and back with a bang.

"What was the cause, if you please, sir?" a boy, probably naughty, inquired; and as Shalders did not vouchsafe a reply, the bigger boys knew.

They revelled in the devilish halo of skirts on the whirl encircling Lord Ormont's laurelled head.

That was a spark in their blood struck from a dislike of the tone assumed by Mr. Shalders to sustain his argument; with his "men are mortal," and talk of a true living champion as "no chicken," and the wordy drawl over "justification for calculating the approach of a close to a term of activity"—in the case of a proved hero!

Guardians of boys should make sure that the boys are on their side before they raise the standard of virtue. Nor ought they to summon morality for support of a polemic. Matey Weyburn's object of worship rode superior to a morality puffing its phrasy

trumpet. And, somehow, the sacrifice of an enormous number of women to Lord Ormont's glory seemed natural; the very thing that should be, in the case of a first-rate military hero and commander—Scipio notwithstanding. It brightens his flame, and it is agreeable to them. That is how they come to distinction: they have no other chance; they are only women; they are mad to be singed, and they rush pell-mell, all for the honour of the candle.

Shortly after this discussion Matey was heard informing some of the bigger fellows he could tell them positively that Lord Ormont's age was under fifty-four —the prime of manhood, and a jolly long way off death! The greater credit to him, therefore, if he had been a name in the world for anything like the period Shalders insinuated, "to get himself out of a sad quandary." Matey sounded the queer word so as to fix it sticking to the usher, calling him Mr. Peter Bell Shalders, at which the boys roared, and there was a question or two about names, which belonged to verses, for people caring to read poems.

To the joy of the school he displayed a greater knowledge of Murat than Shalders had: named the different places in Europe where Lord Ormont and Murat were both springing to the saddle at the same time—one a Marshal, the other a lieutenant; one a

king, to be off his throne any day, the other a born English nobleman, seated firm as fate. And he accused Murat of carelessness of his horses, ingratitude to his benefactor, circussy style. Shalders went so far as to defend Murat for attending to the affairs of his kingdom, instead of galloping over hedges and ditches to swell Napoleon's ranks in distress. Matey listened to him there; he became grave; he nodded like a man saying, "I suppose we must examine it in earnest." The school was damped to hear him calling it a nice question. Still, he said he thought he should have gone; and that settled it.

The boys inclined to speak contemptuously of Shalders. Matey would not let them; he contrasted Shalders with the other ushers, who had no enthusiasms. He said enthusiasms were salt to a man; and he liked Shalders for spelling at his battles and thinking he understood them, and admiring Murat, and reading Virgil and parts of Lucan for his recreation. He said he liked the French because they could be splendidly enthusiastic. He almost lost his English flavour when he spoke in downright approval of a small French fellow, coming from Orthez, near the Pyrenees, for senselessly dashing and kicking at a couple of English who jeered to hear Orthez named —a place trampled under Wellington's heels, on his

march across conquered France. The foreign little cockerel was a clever lad, learning English fast, and anxious to show he had got hold of the English trick of not knowing when he was beaten. His French vanity insisted on his engaging the two, though one of them stood aside, and the other let him drive his nose all the compass round at a poker fist. What was worse, Matey examined these two, in the interests of fair play, as if he doubted.

Little Emile Grenat set matters right with his boast to vindicate his country against double the number, and Matey praised him, though he knew Emile had been floored without effort by the extension of a single fist. He would not hear the French abused; he said they were chivalrous, they were fine fellows, topping the world in some things; his father had fought them and learnt to respect them. Perhaps his father had learnt to respect Jews, for there was a boy named Abner, he protected, who smelt Jewish; he said they ran us Gentiles hard, and carried big guns.

Only a reputation like Matey's could have kept his leadership from a challenge. Joseph Masner, formerly a rival, went about hinting and shrugging; all to no purpose, you find boys born to be chiefs. On the day of the snow-fight Matey won the toss,

and chose J. Masner first pick; and Masner, aged seventeen and some months, big as a navvy, lumbered across to him and took his directions, proud to stand in the front centre, at the head of the attack, and bear the brunt—just what he was fit for. Matey gave no offence by choosing, half-way down the list, his little French friend, whom he stationed beside himself, rather off his battle-front, as at point at cricket, not quite so far removed. Two boys at his heels piled ammunition. The sides met midway of a marshy ground, where a couple of flat and shelving banks, formed for a broad new road, good for ten abreast—counting a step of the slopes—ran transverse; and the order of the game was to clear the bank and drive the enemy on to the frozen ditch-water. Miss Vincent heard in the morning from the sister of little Collett of the great engagement coming off; she was moved by curiosity, and so the young ladies of her establishment beheld the young gentlemen of Mr. Cuper's in furious division, and Matey's sure aim and hard fling, equal to a slinger's, relieving J. Masner of a foremost assailant with a spanker on the nob. They may have fancied him clever for selecting a position rather comfortable, as things went, until they had sight of him with his little French ally and two others, ammunition boys to rear,

descending one bank and scaling another right in the flank of the enemy, when his old tower of a Masner was being heavily pressed by numbers. Then came a fight hand to hand, but the enemy stood in a clamp; not to split like a nut between crackers, they gave way and rolled, backing in lumps from bank to ditch.

The battle was over before the young ladies knew. They wondered to see Matey shuffling on his coat and hopping along at easy bounds to pay his respects to Miss Vincent, near whom was Browny; and this time he and Browny talked together. He then introduced little Emile to her. She spoke of Napoleon at Brienne, and complimented Matey. He said he was cavalry, not artillery, that day. They talked to hear one another's voices. By constantly appealing to Miss Vincent he made their conversation together seem as under her conduct; and she took a slide on some French phrases with little Emile. Her young ladies looked shrinking and envious to see the fellows wet to the skin, laughing, wrestling, linking arms; and some, who were clown-faced with a wipe of scarlet, getting friends to rub their cheeks with snow, all of them happy as larks in air, a big tea steaming for them at the school. Those girls had a leap and a fall of the heart, glad to hug themselves in their

dry clothes, and not so warm as the dripping boys were, nor so madly fond of their dress-circle seats to look on at a play they were not allowed even to desire to share. They looked on at blows given and taken in good temper, hardship sharpening jollity. The thought of the difference between themselves and the boys must have been something like the tight band—call it corset—over the chest, trying to lift and stretch for draughts of air. But Browny's feeling naturally was, that all this advantage for the boys came of Matey Weyburn's lead.

Miss Vincent with her young ladies walked off in couples, orderly chicks, the usual Sunday march of their every day. The school was coolish to them; one of the fellows hummed bars of some hymn tune, rather faster than church. And next day there was a murmur of letters passing between Matey and Browny regularly, little Collett for postman. Anybody might have guessed it, but the report spread a feeling that girls are not the entirely artificial beings or flat targets we suppose. The school began to brood, like air deadening on oven-heat. Winter is hen-mother to the idea of love in schools, if the idea has fairly entered. Various girls of different colours were selected by boys for animated correspondence, that never existed and was vigorously prosecuted,

with efforts to repress contempt of them in courtship for their affections. They found their part of it by no means difficult when they imagined the lines without the words, or, better still, the letter without the lines. A holy satisfaction belonged to the sealed thing; the breaking of the seal and inspection of the contents imposed perplexity on that sentiment. They thought of certain possible sentences Matey and Browny would exchange; but the plain, conceivable, almost visible, outside of the letter had a stronger spell for them than the visionary inside. This fancied contemplation of the love-letter was reversed in them at once by the startling news of Miss Vincent's discovery and seizure of the sealed thing, and her examination of the burden it contained. Then their thirst was for drama—to see, to drink every wonderful syllable those lovers had written.

Miss Vincent's hand was upon one of Matey's letters. She had come across the sister of little Collett, Selina her name was, carrying it. She saw nothing of the others. Aminta was not the girl to let her. Nor did Mr. Cuper dare demand from Matey a sight or restitution of the young lady's half of the correspondence. He preached heavily at Matey; deplored that the boy he most trusted, etc.

—the school could have repeated it without hearing. We know the master's lecture in tones—it sings up to sing down, and touches nobody. As soon as he dropped to natural talk, and spoke of his responsibility and Miss Vincent's, Matey gave the word of a man of honour that he would not seek to communicate further with Miss Farrell at the school.

Now there was a regular thunder-hush among the boys on the rare occasions when they met the girls. All that Matey and Browny were forbidden to write they *looked*—much like what it had been before the discovery; and they dragged the boys back from promised instant events. It was, nevertheless, a heaving picture, like the sea in the background of a marine piece at the theatre, which rouses anticipations of storm, and shows readiness. Browny's full eyebrow sat on her dark eye like a cloud of winter noons over the vanishing sun. Matey was the prisoner gazing at light of a barred window and measuring the strength of the bars. She looked unhappy, but looked unbeaten more. Her look at him fed the school on thoughts of what love really is, when it is not fished out of books and poetry. For though she was pale, starved and pale, they could see she was never the one to be sighing; and as for him, he looked ground down all to edge. However much

they puzzled over things, she made them feel they were sure, as to her, that she drove straight and meant blood, the life or death of it: all her own, if need be, and confidence in the captain she had chosen. She could have been imagined saying, "There is a storm, but I am ready to embark with you this minute."

That sign of courage in real danger ennobled her among girls. The name Browny was put aside for a respectful Aminta. Big and bright events to come out in the world were hinted, from the love of such a couple. The boys were not ashamed to speak the very word love. How he does love that girl! Well, and how she loves him! She did, but the boys had to be seeing her look at Matey if they were to put the girl on some balanced equality with a fellow she was compelled to love. It seemed to them that he gave, and that she was a creature carried to him, like driftwood along the current of the flood, given, in spite of herself. When they saw those eyes of hers they were impressed with an idea of her as a voluntary giver too; pretty well the half to the bargain; and it confused their notion of feminine inferiority. They resolved to think her an exceptional girl, which, in truth, they could easily do, for none but an exceptional girl could win Matey to love her.

Since nothing appeared likely to happen at the school, they speculated upon what would occur out in the world, and were assisted to conjecture by a rumour, telling of Aminta Farrell's aunt as a resident at Dover. Those were days when the benevolently international M. de Porquet had begun to act as interpreter to English schools in the portico of the French language; and under his guidance it was asked, in contempt of the answer, *Combien de postes d'ici à Douvres?* But, accepting the rumour as a piece of information, the answer became important. *Ici* was twenty miles to the north-west of London. How long would it take Matey to reach Douvres? Or at which of the *combien* did he intend to waylay and away with Aminta? The boys went about pounding at the interrogative French phrase in due sincerity, behind the burlesque of traveller bothering coachman. Matey's designs could be guessed only by a knowledge of his character: that he was not the fellow to give up the girl he had taken to; and impediments might multiply, but he would bear them down. Three days before the break-up of the school another rumour came tearing through it: Aminta's aunt had withdrawn her from Miss Vincent's. And now rose the question, two-dozen-mouthed, Did Matey know her address at Douvres? His face grew stringy

and his voice harder, and his eyes ready to burst from a smother of fire. All the same, he did his work: he was the good old fellow at games, considerate in school affairs, kind to the youngsters; he was heard to laugh. He liked best the company of his little French friend from Orthez, over whose shoulder his hand was laid sometimes as they strolled and chatted in two languages. He really went a long way to make French fellows popular, and the boys were sorry that little Emile was off to finish his foreign education in Germany. His English was pretty good, thanks to Matey. He went away, promising to remember Old England, saying he was French first, and a Briton next. He had lots of pluck; which accounted for Matey's choice of him as a friend among the juniors.

CHAPTER II.

LADY CHARLOTTE.

LOVE-PASSAGES at a school must produce a ringing crisis if they are to leave the rosy impression which spans the gap of holidays. Neither Matey nor Browny returned to their yoke, and Cuper's boys recollected the couple chiefly on Sundays. They remembered several of Matey's doings and sayings: his running and high leaping, his bowling, a maxim or two of his, and the tight strong fellow he was; also that the damsel's colour distinctly counted for dark. She became nearly black in their minds. Well, and Englishmen have been known to marry Indian princesses: some have a liking for negresses. There are Nubians rather pretty in pictures, if you can stand thick lips. Her colour does not matter, provided the girl is of the right sort. The exchange of letters between the lovers was mentioned. The discovery by Miss Vincent of their cool habit of corresponding passed for an incident; and there it remained, stiff as a post, not being heated by a story to run. So the fore-

gone excitement lost warmth, and went out like a winter sun at noon or a match lighted before the candle is handy.

Lord Ormont continued to be a subject of discussion from time to time, for he was a name in the newspapers; and Mr. Shalders had been worked by Matey Weyburn into a state of raw antagonism at the mention of the gallant General; he could not avoid sitting in judgment on him.

According to Mr. Shalders, the opinion of all thoughtful people in England was with John Company and the better part of the Press to condemn Lord Ormont in his quarrel with the Commissioner of one of the Indian provinces, who had the support of the Governor of his Presidency and of the Viceroy; the latter not unreservedly, yet ostensibly inclined to condemn a too prompt military hand. The Gordian knot of a difficulty cut is agreeable in the contemplation of an official chief hesitating to use the sword and benefiting by having it done for him. Lord Ormont certainly cut the knot.

Mr. Shalders was cornered by the boys, coming at him one after another without a stop, vowing it was the exercise of a military judgment upon a military question at a period of urgency, which had brought about the quarrel with the Commissioner

and the reproof of the Governor. He betrayed the man completely cornered by generalising. He said—

"We are a civilian people; we pride ourselves on having civilian methods."

"How can that be if we have won India with guns and swords?"

"But that splendid jewel for England's tiara won," said he (and he might as well have said crown), "we are bound to sheathe the sword and govern by the Book of the Law."

"But if they won't have the Book of the Law!"

"They know the power behind it."

"Not if we knock nothing harder than the Book of the Law upon their skulls."

"Happily for the country, England's councils are not directed by boys!"

"Ah, but we're speaking of India, Mr. Shalders."

"You are presuming to speak of an act of insubordination committed by a military officer under civilian command."

"What if we find an influential Indian prince engaged in conspiracy?"

"We look for proof."

"Suppose we have good proof?"

"We summon him to exonerate himself."

"No; we mount and ride straight away into his territory, spot the treason, deport him, and rule in his place!"

It was all very well for Mr. Shalders to say he talked to boys; he was cornered again, as his shrug confessed.

The boys asked among themselves whether he would have taken the same view if his Murat had done it!

These illogical boys fought for Matey Weyburn in their defence of Lord Ormont. Somewhere, they were sure, old Matey was hammering to the same end—they could hear him. Thought of him inspired them to unwonted argumentative energy, that they might support his cause, and scatter the gloomy prediction of the school, as going to the dogs now Matey had left.

The subject provoked everywhere in Great Britain a division similar to that between master and boys at Cuper's establishment: one party for our modern English magisterial methods with Indians, the other for the decisive Oriental at the early time, to suit their native tastes; and the Book of the Law is to be conciliatingly addressed to their sentiments by a benign civilising Power, or the sword is out smartly at the hint of a warning to protect the sword's con-

quests. Under one aspect we appear potteringly European; under another, drunk of the East.

Lord Ormont's ride at the head of two hundred horsemen across a stretch of country including hill and forest, to fall like a bolt from the blue on the suspected Prince in the midst of his gathering warriors, was a handsome piece of daring, and the high-handed treatment of the Prince was held by his advocates to be justified by the provocation and the result. He scattered an unprepared body of many hundreds, who might have enveloped him, and who would presumptively have stood their ground, had they not taken his handful to be the advance of regiments. These are the deeds that win empires! the argument in his favour ran. Are they of a character to maintain empires? the counter-question was urged. Men of a deliberative aspect were not wanting in approval of the sharp and summary of the sword in air when we have to deal with Indians. They chose to regard it as a matter of the dealing with Indians, and put aside the question of the contempt of civil authority.

Counting the cries, Lord Ormont won his case. Festival aldermen, smoking clubmen, buckskin squires, obsequious yet privately excitable tradesmen, sedentary coachmen and cabmen, of Viking descent, were

set to think like boys about him: and the boys, the women, and the poets formed a tipsy chorus. Journalists, on the whole, were fairly halved, as regarded numbers. In relation to weight, they were with the burgess and the presbyter; they preponderated heavily in the direction of England's burgess view of all cases disputed between civilian and soldier. But that was when the peril was over.

Admirers of Lord Ormont enjoyed a perusal of a letter addressed by him to the burgess's journal; and so did his detractors. The printing of it was an act of editorial ruthlessness. The noble soldier had no mould in his intellectual or educational foundry for the casting of sentences; and the editor's leading type to the letter, without further notice of the writer —who was given a prominent place or scaffolding for the execution of himself publicly, if it pleased him to do that thing—tickled the critical mind. Lord Ormont wrote intemperately.

His Titanic hurling of blocks against critics did no harm to an enemy skilled in the use of trimmer weapons, notably the fine one of letting big missiles rebound. He wrote from India, with Indian heat— "curry and capsicums," it was remarked. He dared to claim the countenance of the Commander-in-chief of the Army of India for an act disapproved by the

India House. Other letters might be on their way, curryer than the preceding, his friends feared; and might also be malevolently printed, similarly commissioning the reverberation of them to belabour his name before the public. Admirers were still prepared to admire; but aldermen not at the feast, squirearchs not in the saddle or at the bottle, some few of the juvenile and female fervent, were becoming susceptible to a frosty critical tone in the public pronunciation of Lord Ormont's name since the printing of his letter and the letters it called forth. None of them doubted that his case was good. The doubt concerned the effect on it of his manner of pleading it. And if he damaged his case, he compromised his admirers. Why, the case of a man who has cleverly won a bold stroke for his country must be good, as long as he holds his tongue. A grateful country will right him in the end: he has only to wait, and not so very long. "This I did: now examine it." Nothing more needed to be said by him, if that.

True, he has a temper. It is owned that he is a hero. We take him with his qualities, impetuosity being one, and not unsuited to his arm of the service, as he has shown. If his temper is high, it is an element of a character proved heroical. So has the

sun his blotches, and we believe that they go to nourish the luminary, rather than that they are a disease of the photosphere.

Lord Ormont's apologists had to contend with anecdotes and dicta now pouring in from offended Britons, for illustration of an impetuosity fit to make another Charles XII. of Sweden—a gratuitous Coriolanus haughtiness as well, new among a people accustomed socially to bow the head to their nobles, and not, of late, expecting a kick for their pains. Newspapers wrote of him that, "a martinet to subordinates, he was known for the most unruly of lieutenants." They alluded to current sayings, as that he "habitually took counsel of his horse on the field when a movement was entrusted to his discretion." Numerous were the journalistic sentences running under an air of eulogy of the lordly warrior purposely to be tripped, and producing their damnable effect, despite the obvious artifice. The writer of the letter from Bombay signed Ormont, was a born subject for the antithetical craftsmen's tricky springes.

He was, additionally, of infamous repute for morals in burgess estimation, from his having a keen appreciation of female beauty and a prickly sense of masculine honour. The stir to his name roused

pestilential domestic stories. In those days the aristocrat still claimed licence, and eminent soldier-nobles, comporting themselves as imitative servants of their god Mars, on the fields of love and war, stood necessarily prepared to vindicate their conduct on the field of the measured paces, without deeming themselves bounden to defend the course they took. Our burgess, who bowed head to his aristocrat, and hired the soldier to fight for him, could not see that such misbehaviour necessarily ensued. Lord Ormont had fought duels at home and abroad. His readiness to fight again, and against odds, and with a totally unused weapon, was exhibited by his attack on the Press in the columns of the Press. It wore the comical face to the friends deploring it, which belongs to things we do that are so very like us. They agreed with his devoted sister, Lady Charlotte Eglett, as to the prudence of keeping him out of England for a time, if possible.

At the first perusal of the letter, Lady Charlotte quitted her place in Leicestershire, husband, horses, guests, the hunt, to scour across a vacant London and pick up acquaintances under stress to be spots there in the hunting season, with them to gossip for counsel on the subject of "Ormont's hand-grenade," and how to stop and extinguish a second. She was

a person given to plain speech. "Stinkpot" she called it, when acknowledging foul elements in the composition and the harm it did to the unskilful balist. Her view of the burgess English imaged a mighty monster behind bars, to whom we offer anything but our hand. As soon as he gets hold of that he has you; he won't let it loose with flesh on the bones. We must offend him—we can't be man or woman without offending his tastes and his worships; but while we keep from contact (*i.e.* intercommunication) he may growl, he is harmless. Witness the many occasions when her brother offended worse, and had been unworried, only growled at, and distantly, not in a way to rouse concern; and at the next review, or procession into the City, or public display of any sort, Ormont had but to show himself, he was the popular favourite immediately. He had not committed the folly of writing a letter to a newspaper then.

Lady Charlotte paid an early visit to the office of the great London solicitor, Arthur Abner, who wielded the Law as an instrument of protection for countless illustrious people afflicted by what they stir or attract in a wealthy metropolis. She went simply to gossip of her brother's affairs with a refreshing man of the world, not given to circumlocutions, and

not afraid of her: she had no deeper object; but fancying she heard the clerk, on his jump from the stool, inform her that Mr. Abner was out, "Out?" she cried, and rattled the room, thumping, under knitted brows. "Out of town?" For a man of business taking holidays, when a lady craves for gossip, disappointed her faith in him as cruelly as the shut-up, empty inn the broken hunter knocking at a hollow door miles off home.

Mr. Abner, hatted and gloved and smiling, came forth. "'Going out,' the man meant, Lady Charlotte. At your service for five minutes."

She complimented his acuteness, in the remark, "You see I've only come to chat," and entered his room.

He led her to her theme: "The excitement is pretty well over."

"My brother's my chief care—always was. I'm afraid he'll be pitchforking at it again, and we shall have another blast. That letter ought never to have been printed. That editor deserves the horsewhip for letting it appear. If he prints a second one I shall treat him as a personal enemy."

"Better make a friend of him."

"How?"

"Meet him at my table."

She jumped an illumined half-about on her chair. "So I will, then. What are the creature's tastes?"

"Hunting will do."

"Hunts, does he?" The editor rose in her mind from the state of neuter to something of a man. "I recollect an article in that paper on the Ormont duel. I hate duelling, but I side with my brother. I had to laugh, though. Luckily, there's no woman on hand at present, as far as I know. Ormont's not likely to be hooked by garrison women or blacks. Those coloured women—some of ours too—send the nose to the clouds; not a bad sign for health. And there are men like that old Cardinal Guicciardini tells of . . . hum! Ormont's not one of them. I hope he'll stay in India till this blows over, or I shall be hearing of provocations."

"You have seen the Duke?"

She nodded. Her reserve was a summary of the interview. "Kind, as he always is," she said. "Ormont has no chance of employment unless there's a European war. They can't overlook him in case of war. He'll have to pray for that."

"Let us hope we shan't get it."

"My wish; but I have to think of my brother. If he's in England with no employment, he's in a mess with women and men both. He kicks if he's

laid aside to rust. He has a big heart. That's what I said: all he wants is to serve his country. If you won't have war, give him Gibraltar or Malta, or command of one of our military districts. The South-eastern 'll be vacant soon. He'd like to be Constable of the Castle, and have an eye on France."

"I think he's fond of the French?"

"Loves the French. Expects to have to fight them all the same. He loves his country best. Here's the man everybody's abusing!"

"I demur, my lady. I was dining the other day with a client of mine, and a youngster was present who spoke of Lord Ormont in a way I should like you to have heard. He seemed to know the whole of Lord Ormont's career, from the time of the ride to Paraguay up to the capture of the plotting Rajah. He carried the table."

"Good boy! We must turn to the boys for justice, then. Name your day for this man, this editor."

"I will see him. You shall have the day to-night."

Lady Charlotte and the editor met. She was racy, he anecdotal. Stag, fox, and hare ran before them, over fields and through drawing-rooms: the

scent was rich. They found that they could talk to one another as they thought; that he was not the Isle-bound burgess, nor she the postured English great lady; and they exchanged salt, without which your current scandal is of exhausted savour. They enjoyed the peculiar novel relish of it, coming from a social pressman and a dame of high society. The different hemispheres became known as one sphere to these birds of broad wing convening in the upper blue above a quartered carcase earth.

A week later a letter, the envelope of a bulky letter in Lord Ormont's handwriting, reached Lady Charlotte. There was a line from the editor:

"Would it please your ladyship to have this printed?"

She read the letter, and replied:

"Come to me for six days; you shall have the best mount in the county."

An editor devoid of malice might probably have forborne to print a letter that appealed to Lady Charlotte, or touched her sensations, as if a glimpse of the moon, on the homeward ride in winter on a nodding horse, had suddenly bared to view a pre-

cipitous quarry within two steps. There is no knowing: few men can forbear to tell a spicy story of their friends; and an editor, to whom an exhibition of the immensely preposterous on the part of one writing arrogantly must be provocative, would feel the interests of his Journal, not to speak of the claims of readers, pluck at him when he meditated the consignment of such a precious composition to extinction. Lady Charlotte withheld a sight of the letter from Mr. Eglett. She laid it in her desk, understanding well that it was a laugh lost to the world. Poets could reasonably feign it to shake the desk inclosing it. She had a strong sense of humour; her mind reverted to the desk in a way to make her lips shut grimly. She sided with her brother.

Only pen in hand did he lay himself open to the enemy. In his personal intercourse he was the last of men to be taken at a disadvantage. Lady Charlotte was brought round to the distasteful idea of some help coming from a legitimate adjunct at his elbow: a restraining woman—wife, it had to be said. And to name the word wife for Thomas Rowsley, Earl of Ormont, put up the porcupine quills she bristled with at the survey of a sex thirsting, and likely to continue thirsting, for such honour. What

woman had she known fit to bear the name? She had assumed the judicial seat upon the pretensions of several, and dismissed them to their limbo, after testifying against them. Who is to know the fit one in these mines of deception? Women of the class offering wives decline to be taken on trial; they are boxes of puzzles—often dire surprises. Her brother knew them well enough to shy at the box. Her brother Rowsley had a funny pride, like a boy at a game, at the never having been caught by one among the many he made captive. She let him have it all to himself.

He boasted it to a sister sharing the pride—exultant in the cry of the hawk, scornful of ambitious poultry, a passed finger-post to the plucked, and really regretful that no woman had been created fit for him. When she was not siding with her brother, women, however contemptible for their weakness, appeared to her as better than barn-door fowl, or vermin in their multitudes gnawing to get at the cheese-trap. She could be humane, even sisterly, with women whose conduct or prattle did not outrage plain sense, just as the stickler for the privileges of her class was large-heartedly charitable to the classes flowing in oily orderliness round about below it—if they did so flow. Unable to read

woman's character, except upon the broadest lines, as it were the spider's main threads of its web, she read men minutely, from the fact that they were neither mysteries nor terrors to her, but creatures of importunate appetites, humorous objects; very manageable, if we leave the road to their muscles, dress their wounds, smoothe their creases, plume their vanity; and she had an unerring eye for the man to be used when a blow was needed, methods for setting him in action likewise. She knew how much stronger than ordinary men the woman who can put them in motion. They can be set to serve as pieces of cannon, under compliments on their superior powers, which were not all undervalued by her on their own merits, for she worshipped strength. But she said, with a certain amount of truth, that the women unaware of the advantage Society gave them (as to mastering men) were fools.

Tender, is not a word coming near to Lady Charlotte. Thoughtful on behalf of the poor foolish victims of men she was. She had saved some, avenged others. It should be stated, that her notion of saving was the saving of them from the public: she had thrown up a screen. The saving of them from themselves was another matter—hopeless, to her thinking. How preach at a creature on the

bend of passion's rapids! One might as well read a chapter from the Bible to delirious patients. When once a woman is taken with the love-passion, we must treat her as bitten; hide her antics from the public: that is the principal business. If she recovers, she resumes her place, and horrid old Nature, who drove her to the frenzy, is unlikely to bother or, at least, overthrow her again, unless she is one of the detestable wantons, past compassion or consideration. In the case reviewed, the woman had gone through fire, and is none the worse for her experiences: worth ten times what she was, to an honest man, if men could be got to see it. Some do. Of those men who do not, Lady Charlotte spoke with the old family-nurse humour, which is familiar with the tricks and frailties of the infants; and it is a knife to probe the male, while seemingly it does the part of the napkin—pities and pats. They expect a return of much for the little that is next to nothing. They are full of expectations: and of what else? They are hard bargainers.

She thought this of men; and she liked men by choice. She had old nurse's preference for the lustier male child. The others are puling things, easier to rear, because they bend better; and less esteemed, though they give less trouble, rouse less

care. But when it came to the duel between the man and the woman, her sense of justice was moved to join her with the party of her unfairly handled sisters—a strong party, if it were not so cowardly, she had to think.

Mr. Eglett, her husband, accepted her—accepted the position into which he naturally fell beside her, and the ideas she imposed on him; for she never went counter to his principles. These were the fixed principles of a very wealthy man, who abhorred debt, and was punctilious in veracity, scrupulous in cleanliness of mind and body, devoted to the honour of his country, the interests of his class. She respected the high landmark possessing such principles, and she was therefore enabled to lead without the wish to rule. As it had been between them at the beginning, so it was now, when they were grandparents running on three lines of progeny from two daughters and a son: they were excellent friends. Few couples can say more. The union was good English grey—that of a prolonged November, to which we are reconciled by occasions for the hunt and the gun. She was, nevertheless, an impassioned woman. The feeling for her brother helped to satisfy her heart's fires, though as little with her brother as with her husband was she demon-

strative. Lord Ormont disrelished the caresses of relatives.

She, for her part, had so strong a sympathy on behalf of poor gentlemen reduced to submit to any but a young woman's hug, that when, bronzed from India, he quitted the carriage and mounted her steps at Olmer, the desire to fling herself on his neck and breast took form in the words: "Here you are home again, Rowsley; glad to have you." They shook hands firmly.

He remained three days at Olmer. His temper was mild, his frame of mind bad as could be. Angry evaporations had left a residuum of solid scorn for these "English," who rewarded soldierly services as though it were a question of damaged packages of calico. He threatened to take the first offer of a foreign State "not in insurrection." But clear sky was overhead. He was the Rowsley of the old boyish delight in field sports, reminiscences of prowlings and trappings in the woods, gropings along water-banks, enjoyment of racy gossip. He spoke wrathfully of "one of their newspapers" which steadily persisted in withholding from publication every letter he wrote to it, after printing the first. And if it printed one, why not the others?

Lady Charlotte put it on the quaintness of editors.

He had found in London, perhaps, reason for saying that he should do well to be "out of this country" as early as he could; adding, presently, that he meant to go, though "it broke his heart to keep away from a six months' rest at Steignton," his Wiltshire estate.

No woman was in the field. Lady Charlotte could have submitted to the intrusion of one of those at times wholesome victims, for the sake of the mollification the unhappy proud thing might bring to a hero smarting under injustice at the hands of chiefs and authorities.

He passed on to Steignton, returned to London, and left England for Spain, as he wrote word, saying he hoped to settle at Steignton next year. He was absent the next year, and longer. Lady Charlotte had the surprising news that Steignton was let, shooting and all, for five years; and he had no appointment out of England or at home. When he came to Olmer again he was under one of his fits of reserve, best undisturbed. Her sympathy with a great soldier snubbed, an active man rusting, kept her from remonstrance.

Three years later she was made meditative by

the discovery of a woman's being absolutely in the field, mistress of the field, and having been there for a considerable period, dating from about the time when he turned his back on England to visit a comrade-in-arms condemned by the doctors to pass the winter in Malaga; and it was a young woman, a girl in her teens, a handsome girl. Handsome was to be expected; Ormont bargained for beauty. But report said the girl was very handsome, and showed breeding: she seemed a foreigner, walked like a Goddess, sat her horse the perfect Amazon. Rumour called her a Spaniard.

"Not if she rides!" Lady Charlotte cut that short.

Rumour had subsequently more to say. The reporter in her ear did not confirm it, and she was resolutely deaf to a story incredible of her brother —the man, of all men living, proudest of his name, blood, station. So proud was he by nature, too, that he disdained to complain of rank injustice; he maintained a cheerful front against adversity and obloquy. And this man of complete self-command, who has every form of noble pride, gets cajoled like a twenty-year-old yahoo at college! Do you imagine it? To suppose of a man cherishing the name of Ormont, that he would bestow it legally on a woman,

a stranger, and imperil his race by mixing blood with a creature of unknown lineage, was—why, of course, it was to suppose him struck mad, and there never had been madness among the Ormonts: they were too careful of the purity of the strain. Lady Charlotte talked. She was excited, and ran her sentences to blanks, a cunning way for ministering consolation to her hearing, where the sentence intended a question, and the blank ending caught up the query tone and carried it dwindling away to the most distant of throttled interrogatives. She had, in this manner, only to ask,—her hearing received the comforting answer it desired; for she could take that thin far sound as a travelling laughter of incredulity, triumphant derision.

This meant to her—though she scarcely knew it, though the most wilful of women declined to know it—a state of alarm. She had said of her brother in past days that he would have his time of danger after striking sixty. The dangerous person was to be young.

But, then, Ormont had high principles with regard to the dues to his family. His principles could always be trusted. The dangerous young person would have to be a person of lineage, of a certain station at least: no need for a titled woman,

only for warranted good blood. Is that to be found certificated out of the rolls of Society? It may just possibly be found, without certificate, however, in those muddled caverns where the excluded intermingle. Here and there, in a peasant family, or a small country tradesman's just raised above a peasant, honest regenerating blood will be found. Nobles wanting refreshment from the soil might do worse than try a slip of one of those juicy weeds; ill-fated, sickly Royalties would be set-up striding through another half-century with such invigoration, if it could be done for them! There are tales. The tales are honourably discredited by the crazy constitutions of the heirs to the diadem.

Yes, but we are speculating on the matter seriously, as though it were one of intimate concern to the family. What is there to make us think that Ormont would marry? Impossible to imagine him intimidated. Unlikely that he, as practised reader of women, having so little of the woman in him, would be melted by a wily girl; as women in the twilight situation have often played the trick to come into the bright beams. How? They do a desperate thing, and call it generosity, and then they appeal from it to my lord's generosity; and so the two generosities drive off in a close carriage with a friend

and a professional landlady for the blessing of the parson, and are legitimately united. Women have won round fools to give way in that way. And quite right too! thought Lady Charlotte, siding with nature and justice, and she reflected that no woman created would win round her brother to give way in that way. He was too acute. The moment the woman showed sign of becoming an actress, her doom was written. "Poor idiot!" was not uncharitably inscribed by the sisterly lady on the tombstone of hopes aimed with scarce pardonable ambition at her brother.

She blew away the rumour. Ormont, she vowed, had not entitled any woman to share and bear his title. And this was her interpretation of the report: he permitted (if he did permit) the woman to take his name, that he might have a scornful fling at the world maltreating him. Besides, the name was not published, it was not to be seen in the papers; it passed merely among male friends, tradesmen, servants: no great harm in that.

Listen further. Here is an unknown girl: why should he marry her? A girl consenting to the place beside a man of his handsome ripe age, is either bought, or she is madly enamoured; she does not dictate terms. Ormont is not of the brute buyers in

that market. One sees it is the girl who leads the dance. A girl is rarely so madly enamoured as when she falls in love with her grandfather; she pitches herself at his head. This had not happened for the first time in Ormont's case; and he had never proposed marriage. Why should he do it now?

But again, if the girl has breeding to some extent, he might think it her due that she should pass under the safeguard of his name, out of sight.

Then, so far the report is trustworthy. We blow the rumour out of belief. A young woman there is: she is not a wife. Lady Charlotte allowed her the fairly respectable post of Hecate of the Shades, as long as the girl was no pretender to the place and name in the upper sphere. Her deductions were plausible, convincing to friends shaken by her vehement manner of coming at them. She convinced herself by means of her multitude of reasons for not pursuing inquiry. Her brother said nothing. There was no need for him to speak. He seemed on one or two occasions in the act of getting himself together for the communication of a secret; and she made ready to listen hard, with ears, eyebrows, shut mouth, and a gleam at the back of her eyes, for a signification of something she would refer him to

after he had spoken. He looked at her and held his peace, or virtually held it,—that is, he said not one word on the subject she was to have told him she had anticipated. Lady Charlotte ascribed it to his recollection of the quick blusher, the pained blusher, she was in her girlhood at mention or print of the story of men and women. Who, not having known her, could conceive it! But who could conceive that, behind the positive, plain-dealing, downright woman of the world, there was at times, when a nerve was touched or an old blocked path of imagination thrown open, a sensitive youthfulness, still quick to blush as far as the skin of a grandmother matron might show it!

CHAPTER III.

THE TUTOR.

THERE was no counting now on Lord Ormont's presence in the British gathering seasons, when wheatears wing across our fields or swallows return to their eaves. He forsook the hunt to roam the Continent, one of the vulgar band of tourists, honouring town only when May-flies had flown, and London's indiscriminate people went about without their volatile heads.

Lady Charlotte put these changed conditions upon the behaviour of the military authorities to her brother; saying that the wonder was he did not shake the dust of his country from his feet. In her wise head she rejoiced to think he was not the donkey she sketched for admiration; and she was partly consoled, or played at the taking of a comfort needed in her perpetual struggle with a phantom of a fact, by the reflection that a young woman on his arm would cause him to feel himself more at home abroad. Her mind's habit of living warmly beside

him in separation was vexed by the fixed intrusion of a female third person, who checked the run of intimate chatter, especially damped the fancied talk over early days—of which the creature was ignorant; and her propinquity to him arrested or broke the dialogue Lady Charlotte invented and pressed to renew. But a wife, while letting him be seen, would have insisted on appropriating the thought of him—all his days, past as well as present. An impassioned sister's jealousy preferred that it should not be a wife reigning to dispute her share of her brother in imagination.

Then came a rumour, telling of him as engaged upon the composition of his Memoirs.

Lady Charlotte's impulsive outcry: "Writing them?" signified her grounds for alarm.

Happily, Memoirs are not among the silly deeds done in a moment; they were somewhere ahead and over the hills: a band of brigands rather than a homely shining mansion, it was true; but distant; and a principal question shrieked to know whether he was composing them for publication. She could look forward with a girl's pleasure to the perusal of them in manuscript, in a woody nook, in a fervour of partizanship, easily avoiding sight of errors, grammatical or moral. She chafed at the possible print-

ing and publishing of them. That would be equivalent to an exhibition of him clean-stripped for a run across London—brilliant in himself, spotty in the offence. Published Memoirs indicate the end of man's activity, and that he acknowledges the end; and at a period of Lord Ormont's life when the denial of it should thunder. They are his final chapter, making mummy of the grand figure they wrap in the printed stuff. They are virtually his apology. Can those knowing Lord Ormont hear him apologise? But it is a craven apology if we stoop to expound: we are seen as pleading our case before the public. Call it by any name you please, and under any attitude, it is that. And set aside the writing: it may be perfect; the act is the degradation. It is a rousing of swarms. His friends and the public will see the proudest nobleman of his day, pleading his case in mangled English, in the headlong of an outpoured, undrilled, rabble vocabulary, doubling the ridicule by his imperturbability over the ridicule he excites: he who is no more ridiculous, cried the partizan sister, conjuring up the scene, not an ace more ridiculous, than a judge of assize calling himself miserable sinner on Sunday before the parson, after he has very properly condemned half a score of weekday miserable sinners to penal servitude or

the rope. Nobody laughs at the judge. Everybody will be laughing at the scornful man down half-way to his knee-caps with a stutter of an apology for having done his duty to his country, after stigmatising numbers for inability or ill-will to do it. But Ormont's weapon is the sword, not a pen! Lady Charlotte hunted her simile till the dogs had it or it ran to earth.

She struck at the conclusion, that the young woman had been persuading him. An adoring young woman is the person to imagine and induce to the commission of such folly. "What do you think? You have seen her, you say?" she asked of a man she welcomed for his flavour of the worldling's fine bile.

Lord Adderwood made answer: "She may be having a hand in it. She worships, and that is your way of pulling gods to the ground."

"Does she understand good English?"

"Speaks it."

"Can she write?"

"I have never had a letter from her."

"You tell me Morsfield admires the woman—would marry her to-morrow, if he could get her."

"He would go through the ceremony Ormont has perfórmed, I do not doubt."

"I don't doubt all of you are ready. She doesn't encourage one?"

"On the contrary, all."

"She's clever. This has been going on for now seven years, and, as far as I know, she has my brother fast."

"She may have done the clever trick of having him fast from the beginning."

"She'd like people to think it."

"She has an aunt to advertise it."

"Ormont can't swallow the woman, I'm told."

"Trying, if one is bound to get her down!"

"Boasts of the connection everywhere she's admitted, Randeller says."

"Randeller procures the admission to various parti-coloured places."

"She must be a blinking moll-owl! And I ask any sane Christian or Pagan—proof enough!—would my brother Rowsley let his wife visit those places, those people? Monstrous to have the suspicion that he would, if you know him! Mrs. Lawrence Finchley, for example. I say nothing to hurt the poor woman; I back her against her imbecile of a husband. He brings a charge he can't support; she punishes him by taking three years' lease of independence, and kicks up the grass all over the paddock, and then

comes cuckoo, barking his name abroad to have her home again. You can win the shyest filly to corn at last. She goes, and he digests ruefully the hotch-potch of a dish the woman brings him. Only the world spies a side-head at her, husbanded or not, though the main fault was his, and she had a right to insist that he should be sure of his charge before he smacked her in the face with it before the world. In dealing with a woman, a man commonly prudent —put aside chivalry, justice, and the rest—should bind himself to disbelieve what he can't prove. Otherwise, let him expect his whipping, with or without ornament. My opinion is, Lawrence Finchley had no solid foundation for his charge, except his being an imbecile. She wasn't one of the adventurous women to jump the bars,—the gate had to be pushed open, and he did it. There she is; and I ask you, would my brother Rowsley let his *wife* be intimate with her? And there are others. And, *sauf votre respect,* the men—Morsfield for one, Randeller another!"

"They have a wholesome dread of the lion."

"If they smell a chance with the lion's bone—it's the sweeter for being the lion's. These metaphors carry us off our ground. I must let these Ormont Memoirs run and upset him, if they get to print.

I've only to oppose, printed they'll be. The same if I say a word of this woman, he marries her to-morrow morning. You speak of my driving men. Why can't I drive Ormont? Because I'm too fond of him. There you have the secret of the subjection of women: they can hold their own, and a bit more, when they've no enemy beating inside."

"Hearts!—ah, well, it's possible. I don't say no; I've not discovered them," Lord Adderwood observed.

They are rarely discovered in the haunts he frequented.

Her allusion to Mrs. Lawrence Finchley rapped him smartly, and she admired his impassiveness under the stroke. Such a spectacle was one of her pleasures.

Lady Charlotte mentioned incidentally her want of a tutor for her grandson Leo during the winter holidays. He suggested an application to the clergyman of her parish. She was at feud with the Rev. Stephen Hampton-Evey, and would not take, she said, a man to be a bootblack in her backyard or a woman a scullery-wench in her kitchen upon his recommendation. She described the person of Mr. Hampton-Evey, his manner of speech, general opinions, professional doctrines; rolled him into a

ball and bowled him, with a shrug for lamentation, over the decay of the good old order of manly English Protestant clergymen, who drank their port, bothered nobody about belief, abstained from preaching their sermon, if requested; were capital fellows in the hunting-field, too; for if they came, they had the spur to hunt in the devil's despite. Now we are going to have a kind of bitter, clawed, forked female, in vestments over breeches. "How do you like that bundling of the sexes?"

Lord Adderwood liked the lines of division to be strictly and invitingly definite. He was thinking, as he reviewed the frittered appearance of the Rev. Stephen Hampton-Evey in Lady Charlotte's hands, of the possibility that Lord Ormont, who was reputed to fear nobody, feared her. In which case, the handsome young woman passing among his associates as the pseudo Lady Ormont might be the real one after all, and Isabella Lawrence Finchley prove right in the warning she gave to dogs of chase.

The tutor required by Lady Charlotte was found for her by Mr. Abner. Their correspondence on the subject filled the space of a week, and then the gentleman hired to drive a creaky wheel came down from London to Olmer, arriving late in the evening.

Lady Charlotte's blunt "Oh!" when he entered her room and bowed upon the announcement of his name, was caused by an instantaneous perception and reflection that it would be prudent to keep her grand-daughter Philippa, aged between seventeen and eighteen, out of his way.

"You are a friend of Mr. Abner's, are you?"

He was not disconcerted. He replied, in an assured and pleasant voice, "I have hardly the pretension to be called a friend, madam."

"Are you a Jew?"

Her abruptness knocked something like a laugh almost out of him, but he restained the signs of it.

"I am not."

"You wouldn't be ashamed to tell me you were one if you were?"

"Not at all."

"You like the Jews?"

"Those I know I like."

"Not many Christians have the good sense and the good heart of Arthur Abner. Now go and eat. Come back to me when you've done. I hope you are hungry. Ask the butler for the wine you prefer."

She had not anticipated the enrolment in her household of a man as young and good-looking.

These were qualifications for Cupid's business, which his unstrained self-possession accentuated to a note of danger to her chicks, because she liked the taste of him. Her grand-daughter Philippa was in the girl's waxen age; another, Beatrice, was coming to it. Both were under her care; and she was a vigilant woman, with an intuition and a knowledge of sex. She did not blame Arthur Abner for sending her a good-looking young man; she had only a general idea that tutors in a house, and even visiting tutors, should smell of dust and wear a snuffy appearance. The conditions will not always insure the tutors from foolishness, as her girl's experience reminded her, but they protect the girl.

"Your name is Weyburn; your father was an officer in the army, killed on the battle-field, Arthur Abner tells me," was her somewhat severely-toned greeting to the young tutor on his presenting himself the second time.

It had the sound of the preliminary of an indictment read in a Court of Law.

"My father died of his wounds in hospital," he said.

"Why did you not enter the service?"

"Want of an income, my lady."

"Bad look-out. Army or Navy for gentlemen, if

they stick to the school of honour. The sedentary professions corrupt men: bad for the blood. Those monastery monks found that out. They had to birch the devil out of them three times a day and half the night, howling like full-moon dogs all through their lives, till the flesh was off them. That was their exercise, if they were for holiness. My brother, Lord Ormont, has never been still in his youth or his manhood. See him now. He counts his years by scores; and he has about as many wrinkles as you when you're smiling. His cheeks are as red as yours now you're blushing. You ought to have left off that trick by this time. It's well enough in a boy."

Against her will she was drawn to the young man, and her consciousness of it plucked her back to caution with occasional jerks—quaint alternations of the familiar and the harshly formal, in the stranger's experience.

"If I have your permission, Lady Charlotte," said he, "the reason why I mount red a little—if I do it—is, you mention Lord Ormont, and I have followed his career since I was the youngest of boys."

"Good to begin with the worship of a hero. He can't sham, can't deceive—not even a woman; and

you're old enough to understand the temptation: they're so silly. All the more, it's a point of honour with a man of honour to shield her from herself. When it's a girl——"

The young man's eyebrows bent.

"Chapters of stories, if you want to hear them," she resumed; "and I can vouch some of them true. Lord Ormont was never one of the wolves in a hood. Whatever you hear of him, you may be sure he laid no trap. He's just the opposite to the hypocrite; so hypocrites hate him. I've heard them called high-priests of decency. Then we choose to be indecent and honest, if there's a God to worship. Fear, they're in the habit of saying—we are to fear God. A man here, a Rev. Hampton-Evey, you'll hear him harp on 'fear God.' Hypocrites may: honest sinners have no fear. And see the cause: they don't deceive themselves—that is why. Do you think we can love what we fear? They love God, or they disbelieve. And if they believe in Him, they know they can't conceal anything from Him. Honesty means piety: we can't be one without the other. And here are people—parsons—who talk of dying as *going* into the presence of our Maker, as if He had been all the while outside the world He created. Those parsons, I told the Rev. Hampton-

Evey here, make infidels—they make a puzzle of their God. I'm for a rational Deity. They preach up a supernatural eccentric. I don't say all: I've heard good sermons, and met sound-headed clergymen—not like that gaping Hampton-Evey, when a woman tells him she thinks for herself. We have him sitting on our parish. A free-thinker startles him as a kind of demon; but a female free-thinker is one of Satan's concubines. He took it upon himself to reproach me—flung his glove at my feet, because I sent a cheque to a poor man punished for blasphemy. The man had the right to his opinions, and he had the courage of his opinions. I doubt whether the Rev. Hampton-Evey would go with a willing heart to prison for his. All the better for him if he comes head-up out of a trial. But now see: all these parsons and judges and mobcaps insist upon conformity. A man with common manly courage comes before them, and he's cast in penalties. Yet we know from history, in England, France, Germany, that the time of nonconformity brought out the manhood of the nation. Now, I say, a nation, to be a nation, must have men—I mean brave men. That's what those hosts of female men combine to try to stifle. They won't succeed, but we shall want a war to teach the country the value

of courage. You catch what I am driving at? They accuse my brother of immorality because he makes no pretence to be better than the men of his class."

Weyburn's eyelids fluttered. Her kite-like ascent into the general, with the sudden drop on her choice morsel, switched his humour at the moment when he was respectfully considering that her dartings and gyrations had motive as much as the flight of the swallow for food. They had meaning; and here was one of the great ladies of the land who thought for herself, and was thoughtful for the country. If she came down like a bird winged, it was her love of her brother that did it. His look at Lady Charlotte glistened.

She raised her defences against the basilisk fascinating Philippa; and with a vow to keep them apart and deprive him of his chance, she relapsed upon the stiff frigidity which was not natural to her. It lasted long enough to put him on his guard under the seductions of a noble dame's condescension to a familiar tone. But, as he was too well bred to show the change in his mind for her change of manner, and as she was the sister of his boyhood's hero, and could be full of flavour, his eyes retained something of their sparkle. They were ready to lighten again,

in the way peculiar to him, when she, quite forgetting her defence of Philippa, disburdened herself of her antagonisms and enthusiasms, her hates and her loves all round the neighbourhood and over the world, won to confidential communication by this young man's face. She confessed as much, had he been guided to perceive it. She said, "Arthur Abner's a reader of men: I can trust his word about them."

Presently, it is true, she added: "No man's to be relied upon where there's a woman." She refused her implicit trust to saints—"if ever a man really was a saint before he was canonised!"

Her penetrative instinct of sex kindled the scepticism. Sex she saw at play everywhere, dogging the conduct of affairs, directing them at times; she saw it as the animation of nature, senselessly stigmatised, hypocritically concealed, active in our thoughts where not in our deeds; and the declining of the decorous to see it, or admit the sight, got them abhorred bad names from her, after a touch at the deadly poison coming of that blindness, or blindfoldedness, and a grimly melancholy shrug over the cruelties resulting—cruelties chiefly affecting women.

"You're too young to have thought upon such matters," she said, for a finish to them.

That was hardly true.

"I have thought," said Weyburn, and his head fell to reckoning of the small sum of his thoughts upon them.

He was pulled up instantly for close inspection by the judge. "What is your age?"

"I am in my twenty-sixth year."

"You have been among men: have you studied women?"

"Not largely, Lady Charlotte. Opportunity has been wanting at French and German colleges."

"It's only a large and a close and a pretty long study of them that can teach you anything; and you must get rid of the poetry about them, and be sure you haven't lost it altogether. That's what is called the golden mean. I'm not for the golden mean in every instance; it's a way of exhorting to brutal selfishness. I grant it's the right way in those questions. You'll learn in time." Her scanning gaze at the young man's face drove him along an avenue of his very possible chances of learning. "Certain to. But don't tell me that at your age you have thought about women. You may say you have felt. A young man's feelings about women are better reading for him six or a dozen chapters further on.

Then he can sift and strain. It won't be perfectly clear, but it will do."

Mr. Eglett hereupon threw the door open, and ushered in Master Leo.

Lady Charlotte noticed that the tutor shook the boy's hand offhandedly, with not a whit of the usual obtrusive geniality, and merely dropped him a word. Soon after, he was talking to Mr. Eglett of games at home and games abroad. Poor fun over there! We head the world in field games, at all events. He drew a picture of a foreigner of his acquaintance looking on at football. On the other hand, French boys and German, having passed a year or two at an English school, get the liking for our games, and do a lot of good when they go home. The things we learn from them are to dance, to sing, and to study:—they are more in earnest than we about study. They teach us at fencing too. The tutor praised fencing as an exercise and an accomplishment. He had large reserves of eulogy for boxing. He knew the qualities of the famous bruisers of the time, cited fisty names, whose owners were then to be seen all over an admiring land in prints, in the glorious defensive-offensive attitude, England's own —Touch me, if you dare! with bullish, or bull-dog,

or oak-bole fronts for the blow, handsome to pugilistic eyes.

The young tutor had lighted on a pet theme of Mr. Eglett's—the excelling virtues of the practice of pugilism in Old England, and the school of honour that it is to our lower population. "Fifty times better for them than cock-fighting," he exclaimed, admitting that he could be an interested spectator at a ring or the pit: cock-fighting or ratting.

"Ratting seems to have more excuse," the tutor said, and made no sign of a liking for either of those popular pastimes. As he disapproved without squeamishness, the impulsive but sharply critical woman close by nodded; and she gave him his dues for being no courtier.

Leo had to be off to bed. The tutor spared him any struggle over the shaking of hands, and saying, "Good-night, Leo," continued the conversation. The boy went away visibly relieved of the cramp that seizes on a youngster at the formalities pertaining to these chilly and fateful introductions.

"What do you think of the look of him?" Mr. Eglett asked.

The tutor had not appeared to inspect the boy. "Big head," he remarked. "Yes, Leo won't want

pushing at books when he's once in harness. He will have six weeks of me. It's more than the yeomanry get for drill per annum, and they're expected to know something of a soldier's duties. There's a chance of putting him on the right road in certain matters. We'll walk, or ride, or skate, if the frost holds to-morrow: no lessons the first day."

"Do as you think fit," said Lady Charlotte.

The one defect she saw in the tutor did not concern his pupil. And a girl, if hit, would be unable to see that this tutor, judged as a man, was to some extent despicable for accepting tutorships, and, one might say, dishonouring the family of a soldier of rank and distinction, by coming into houses at the back way, with footing enough to air his graces when once established there. He ought to have knocked at every door in the kingdom for help, rather than accept tutorships, and disturb households (or providently-minded mistresses of them) with all sorts of probably groundless apprehensions, founded naturally enough on the good looks he intrudes.

This tutor committed the offence next day of showing he had a firm and easy seat in the saddle, which increased Lady Charlotte's liking for him and irritated her watchful forecasts. She rode with the

young man after lunch, "to show him the country," and gave him a taste of what he took for her variable moods. He misjudged her. Like a swimmer going through warm and cold springs of certain lake waters, he thought her a capricious ladyship, dangerous for intimacy, alluring to the deeps and gripping with cramps.

She pushed him to defend his choice of the tutor's profession.

"Think you understand boys?" she caught up his words; "you can't. You can humour them, as you humour women. They're just as hard to read. And don't tell me a young man can read women. Boys and women go on their instincts. Egyptologists can spell you hieroglyphs; they'd be stumped, as Leo would say, to read a spider out of an ink-pot over a sheet of paper."

"One gets to interpret by degrees, by observing their habits," the tutor said, and vexed her with a towering complacency under provocation that went some way further to melt the woman she was, while her knowledge of the softness warned her still more of the duty of playing dragon round such a young man in her house. The despot is alert at every issue, to every chance; and she was one, the wake-

fuller for being benevolent; her mind had no sleep by day.

For a month she subjected Mr. Matthew Weyburn to the microscope of her observation and the probe of her instinct. He proved that he could manage without cajoling a boy. The practical fact established, by agreement between herself and the unobservant gentleman who was her husband, Lady Charlotte allowed her meditations to drop an indifferent glance at the speculative views upon education entertained by this young tutor. To her mind they were flighty; but she liked him, and as her feelings dictated to her mind when she had not to think for others, she spoke of his views toleratingly, almost with an implied approval, after passing them through the form of burlesque to which she customarily treated things failing to waft her enthusiasm. In regard to Philippa, he behaved well: he bestowed more of his attention on Beatrice, nearer Leo's age, in talk about games and storybooks and battles; nothing that he did when the girls were present betrayed the strutting plumed cock, bent to attract, or the sickly reptile, thirsty for a prize above him and meaning to have it, like Satan in Eden. Still, of course, he could not help his being a handsome fellow, having a vivid face

and eyes transparent, whether blue or green, to flame of the brain exciting them; and that becomes a picture in the dream of girls—a picture creating the dream often. And Philippa had asked her grandmother, very ingenuously indeed, with a most natural candour, why "they saw so little of Leo's hero." Simple female child!

However, there was no harm done, and Lady Charlotte liked him. She liked few. Forthwith, in the manner of her particular head, a restless head, she fell to work at combinations.

Thus:—he is a nice young fellow, well bred, no cringing courtier, accomplished, good at classics, fairish at mathematics, a scholar in French, German, Italian, with a shrewd knowledge of the different races, and with sound English sentiment too, and the capacity for writing good English, although in those views of his the ideas are unusual, therefore un-English, profoundly so. But his intentions are patriotic; they would not displease Lord Ormont. He has a worship of Lord Ormont. All we can say on behalf of an untried inferior is in that,—only the valiant admire devotedly. Well, he can write grammatical, readable English. What if Lord Ormont were to take him as a secretary while the Memoirs are in hand? He might help to chasten the sen-

tences laughed at by those newspapers. Or he might, being a terrible critic of writing, and funny about styles, put it in an absurd light, that would cause the Memoirs to be tossed into the fire. He was made for the post of secretary! The young man's good looks would be out of harm's way then. If any sprig of womankind come across him there, it will, at any rate, not be a girl. Women must take care of themselves. Only the fools among them run to mischief in the case of a handsome young fellow.

Supposing a certain woman to be one of the fools? Lady Charlotte merely suggested it in the dashing current of her meditations—did not strike it out interrogatively. The woman would be a fine specimen among her class; that was all. For the favourite of Lord Ormont to stoop from her place beside him—ay, but women do; heroes have had the woeful experience of that fact. First we see them aiming themselves at their hero; next they are shooting an eye at the handsome man. The thirst of nature comes after that of their fancy, in conventional women. Sick of the hero tried, tired of their place in the market, no longer ashamed to acknowledge it, they begin to consult their own taste for beauty—they have it quite as much as the men have it; and

when their worshipped figure of manliness, in a romantic sombrero, is a threadbare giant, showing bruises, they sink on their inherent desire for a dance with the handsome man. And the really handsome man is the most extraordinary of the rarities. No wonder that when he appears he slays them, walks over them like a pestilence!

This young Weyburn would touch the fancy of a woman of a romantic turn. Supposing her enthusiastic in her worship of the hero, after a number of years—for anything may be imagined where a woman is concerned—why, another enthusiasm for the same object, and on the part of a stranger, a stranger with effective eyes, rapidly leads to sympathy. Suppose the reverse—the enthusiasm gone to dust, or become a wheezy old bellows, as it does where there's disparity of age, or it frequently does—then the sympathy with a good-looking stranger comes more rapidly still.

These were Lady Charlotte's glances right and left—idle flights of the eye of a mounted Amazon across hedges at the canter along the main road of her scheme; which was to do a service to the young man she liked and to the brother she loved, for the marked advantage of both equally; perhaps for the chance of a little gossip to follow about that tenacious woman by whom her brother was held hard

and fast, kept away from friends and relatives, isolated, insomuch as to have given up living on his estate—the old home!—because he would not disgrace it or incur odium by taking her there.

In consequence of Lord Ormont's resistance to pressure from her on two or three occasions, she chose to nurse and be governed by the maxim for herself: Never propose a plan to him, if you want it adopted. That was her way of harmlessly solacing love's vindictiveness for an injury.

She sent Arthur Abner a letter, thanking him for his recommendation of young Mr. Weyburn, stating her benevolent wishes as regarded the young man and "those hateful Memoirs," requesting that her name should not be mentioned in the affair, because she was anxious on all grounds to have the proposal accepted by her brother. She could have vowed to herself that she wrote sincerely.

"He must want a secretary. He would be shy at an offer of one from me. Do you hint it, if you get a chance. You gave us Mr. Weyburn, and Mr. Eglett and I like him. Ormont would too, I am certain. You have obliged him before; this will be better than anything you have done for us. It will stop the Memoirs, or else give them a polish. Your young friend has made me laugh over stuff taken

for literature until we put on our spectacles. Leo jogs along in harness now, and may do some work at school yet."

Having posted her letter, she left the issue to chance, as we may when conscience is easy. An answer came the day before Weyburn's departure. Arthur Abner had met Lord Ormont in the street, had spoken of the rumour of Memoirs promised to the world, hinted at the possible need for a secretary; "Lord Ormont would appoint a day to see Mr. Weyburn."

Lady Charlotte considered that to be as good as the engagement.

"So we keep you in the family," she said. "And now look here: you ought to know my brother's ways, if you're going to serve him. You'll have to guess at half of everything he tells you; he'll expect you to know the whole. There's no man so secret. Why? He fears nothing; I can't tell why. And what his mouth shuts on, he exposes as if in his hand. Of course he's proud, and good reason. You'll see when you mustn't offend. A lady's in the house—I hear of it. She takes his name, they say. She may be a respectable woman—I've heard no scandal. We have to hear of a Lady Ormont out of Society! We have to suppose it means there's not to be a real

one. He can't marry if he has allowed her to go about bearing his name. She has a fool of an aunt, I'm told; as often in the house as not. Good proof of his fondness for the woman, if he swallows half a year of the aunt! Well, you won't, unless you've mere man's eyes, be able to help seeing him trying to hide what he suffers from that aunt. He bears it, like the man he is; but woe to another betraying it! She has a tongue that goes like the reel of a rod, with a pike bolting out of the shallows to the snag he knows—to wind round it and defy you to pull. Often my brother Rowsley and I have fished the day long, and in hard weather, and brought home a basket; and he boasted of it more than of anything he has ever done since. That woman holds him away from me now. I say no harm of her. She may be right enough from her point of view; or it mayn't be owing to her. I wouldn't blame a woman. Well, but my point with you is, swallow the woman's aunt—the lady's aunt—without betraying you suffer at all. Lord Ormont has eyes of an eagle for a speck above the surface. All the more because the aunt is a gabbling idiot does he—I say it seeing it —fire up to defend her from the sneer of the lip or half a sign of it! No, you would be on your guard; I can trust you. Of course you'd behave like the

gentleman you are where any kind of woman's concerned; but you mustn't let a shadow be seen, think what you may. The woman—lady—calling herself Lady Ormont,—poor woman, I should do the same in her place,—she has a hard game to play; I have to be for my family: she has manners, I'm told; holds herself properly. She fancies she brings him up to the altar, in the end, by decent behaviour. That's a delusion. It's creditable to her, only she can't understand the claims of the family upon a man like my brother. When you have spare time —'kick-ups,' he used to call it, writing to me from school—come here; you're welcome, after three days' notice. I shall be glad to see you again. You've gone some way to make a man of Leo."

He liked her well: he promised to come. She was a sinewy bite of the gentle sex, but she had much flavour and she gave nourishment.

"Let me have three days' notice," she repeated.

"Not less, Lady Charlotte," said he.

Weyburn received intimation from Arthur Abner of the likely day Lord Ormont would appoint, and he left Olmer for London to hold himself in readiness. Lady Charlotte and Leo drove him to meet the coach. Philippa, so strangely baffled in her natural curiosity, begged for a seat; she begged to

be allowed to ride. Petitions were rejected. She stood at the window seeing "Grandmama's tutor," as she named him, carried off by grandmama. Her nature was avenged on her tyrant grandmama: it brought up almost to her tongue thoughts which would have remained subterranean, under control of her habit of mind, or the nursery's modesty, if she had been less tyrannically treated. They were subterranean thoughts, Nature's original, such as the sense of injustice will rouse in young women; and they are better unstirred, for they ripen girls overrapidly when they are made to revolve near the surface. It flashed on the girl why she had been treated tyrannically.

"Grandmama has good taste in tutors," was all that she said while the thoughts rolled over.

CHAPTER IV.

RECOGNITION.

OUR applicant for the post of secretary entered the street of Lord Ormont's London house, to present himself to his boyhood's hero by appointment.

He was to see, perhaps to serve, the great soldier. Things had come to this; and he thought it singular. But for the previous introduction to Lady Charlotte, he would have thought it passing wonderful. He ascribed it to the whirligig.

The young man was not yet of an age to gather knowledge of himself and of life from his present experience of the fact, that passionate devotion to an object strikes a vein through circumstances, as a travelling run of flame darts the seeming haphazard zigzags to catch at the dry of dead wood amid the damp; and when passion has become quiescent in the admirer, there is often the unsubsided first impulsion carrying it on. He will almost surely embrace his idol with one or other of the senses.

Weyburn still read the world as it came to him,

by bits, marvelling at this and that, after the fashion of most of us. He had not deserted his adolescent's hero, or fallen upon analysis of a past season. But he was now a young man, stoutly and cognizantly on the climb, with a good aim overhead, and green youth's enthusiasms a step below his heels: one of the lovers of life, beautiful to behold, when we spy into them; generally their aspect is an enlivenment, whatever may be the carving of their features. For the sake of holy unity, this lover of life, whose gaze was to the front in hungry animation, held fast to his young dreams, perceiving a soul of meaning in them, though the fire might have gone out; and he confessed to a past pursuit of delusions. Young men of this kind will have, for the like reason, a similar rational sentiment on behalf of our world's historic forward march, while admitting that history has to be taken from far backward if we would gain assurance of man's advance. It nerves an admonished ambition.

He was ushered into a London house's library, looking over a niggard enclosure of gravel and dull grass, against a wall where ivy dribbled. An arm-chair was beside the fireplace. To right and left of it a floreate company of books in high cases paraded shoulder to shoulder, without a gap, grenadiers on

the line. Weyburn read the titles on their scarlet-and-blue facings. They were approved English classics; honoured veterans, who have emerged from the conflict with contemporary opinion, stamped excellent, or have been pushed by the roar of contemporaneous applauses to wear the leather-and-gilt uniform of our Immortals, until a more qualmish posterity disgorges them. The books had costly bindings. Lord Ormont's treatment of Literature appeared to resemble Lady Charlotte's, in being reverential and uninquiring. The books she bought to read were Memoirs of her time by dead men and women once known to her. These did fatigue duty in cloth or undress. It was high drill with all of Lord Ormont's books, and there was not a modern or a minor name among the regiments. They smelt strongly of the bookseller's lump lots by order; but if a show soldiery, they were not a sham, like a certain row of venerably-titled backs, that Lady Charlotte, without scruple, left standing to blow an ecclesiastical trumpet of empty contents; any one might have his battle of brains with them, for the turning of an absent key.

The door opened. Weyburn bowed to his old star in human shape: a grey head on square shoulders, filling the doorway. He had seen at Olmer

Lady Charlotte's treasured miniature portrait of her brother; a perfect likeness, she said—complaining the next instant of injustice done to the fire of his look.

Fire was low down behind the eyes at present. They were quick to scan and take summary of their object, as the young man felt while observing for himself. Height and build of body were such as might be expected in the brother of Lady Charlotte and from the tales of his prowess. Weyburn had a glance back at Cuper's boys listening to the tales.

The soldier-lord's manner was courteously military—that of an established superior indifferent to the deferential attitude he must needs exact. His curt nick of the head, for a response to the visitor's formal salutation, signified the requisite acknowledgment, like a city creditor's busy stroke of the type-stamp receipt upon payment.

The ceremony over, he pitched a bugle voice to fit the contracted area: "I hear from Mr. Abner that you have made acquaintance with Olmer. Good hunting country there."

"Lady Charlotte kindly gave me a mount, my lord."

"I knew your father by name—Colonel Sidney

Weyburn. You lost him at Toulouse. We were in the Peninsula; I was at Talavera with him. Bad day for our cavalry."

"Our officers were young at their work then."

"They taught the Emperor's troops to respect a charge of English horse. It was teaching their fox to set traps for them."

Lord Ormont indicated a chair. He stood.

"The French had good cavalry leaders," Weyburn said, for cover to a continued study of the face.

"Montbrun, yes: Murat, Lassalle, Bessières. Under the Emperor they had."

"You think them not at home in the saddle, my lord?"

"Frenchmen have nerves; horses *are* nerves. They pile excitement too high. When cool, they're among the best. None of them had head for command of all the arms."

"One might say the same of Seidlitz and Ziethen?"

"Of Ziethen. Seidlitz had a wider grasp, I suppose." He pursed his mouth, pondering. "No; and in the Austrian service, too; generals of cavalry are left to whistle for an independent command. There's a jealousy of our branch!" The injured warrior

frowned and hummed. He spoke his thought mildly: "Jealousy of the name of soldier in this country! Out of the service, is the place to recommend. I'd have advised a son of mine to train for a jockey rather than enter it. We deal with that to-morrow, in my papers. You come to me? Mr. Abner has arranged the terms? So I see you at ten in the morning. I am glad to meet a young man—Englishman—who takes an interest in the service."

Weyburn fancied the hearing of a step; he heard the whispering dress. It passed him; a lady went to the armchair. She took her seat, as she had moved, with sedateness, the exchange of a toneless word with my lord. She was a *brune*. He saw that when he rose to do homage.

Lord Ormont resumed: "Some are born to it, must be soldiers; and in peace they are snubbed by the heads; in war they are abused by the country. They don't understand in England how to treat an army; how to make one either!

"The gentleman — Mr. Weyburn: Mr. Arthur Abner's recommendation," he added hurriedly, with a light wave of his hand and a murmur, that might be the lady's title; continuing: "A young man of military tastes should take service abroad. They're

in earnest about it over there. Here they play at it; and an army's shipped to land without commissariat, ambulances, medical stores, and march against the odds, as usual—if it can march!"

"Albuera, my lord?"

"Our men can spurt, for a flick o' the whip. They're expected to be constantly ready for doing prodigies—to repair the country's omissions. All the country cares for is to hope Dick Turpin may get to York. Our men are good beasts; they give the best in 'em, and drop. More's the scandal to a country that has grand material and overtasks it. A blazing disaster ends the chapter!"

This was talk of an injured veteran. It did not deepen the hue of his ruddied skin. He spoke in the tone of matter of fact. Weyburn had been prepared for something of the sort by his friend, Arthur Abner. He noted the speaker's heightened likeness under excitement to Lady Charlotte. Excitement came at an early call of their voices to both; and both had handsome, open features, bluntly cut, nothing of aquiline or the supercilious; eyes bluish-grey, in arched recesses, horny between the thick lids, lively to shoot their meaning when the trap-mouth was active; effectively expressing promptitude for combat, pleasure in attack, wrestle, tug, what-

ever pertained to strife; an absolute sense of their right.

As there was a third person present at this discussion of military topics, the silence of the lady drew Weyburn to consult her opinion in her look.

It was on him. Strange are the woman's eyes which can unoffendingly assume the privilege to dwell on such a living object as a man without becoming gateways for his return look, and can seem in pursuit of thoughts while they enfold. They were large dark eyes, eyes of southern night. They sped no shot; they rolled forth an envelopment. A child among toys, caught to think of other toys, may gaze in that way. But these were a woman's eyes.

He gave Lord Ormont his whole face, as an auditor should. He was interested besides, as he told a ruffled conscience. He fell upon the study of his old hero determinedly.

The pain of a memory waking under pillows, unable to do more than strain for breath, distracted his attention. There was a memory: that was all he knew. Or else he would have lashed himself for hanging on the beautiful eyes of a woman. To be seeing and hearing his old hero was wonder enough.

Recollections of Lady Charlotte's plain hints re-

garding the lady present resolved to the gross retort, that her eyes were beautiful. And he knew them—there lay the strangeness. They were known beautiful eyes, in a foreign land of night and mist.

Lord Ormont was discoursing with racy eloquence of our hold on India: his views in which respect were those of Cuper's boys. Weyburn ventured a dot-running description of the famous ride, and out flew an English soldier's grievance. But was not the unjustly-treated great soldier well rewarded, whatever the snubs and the bitterness, with these large dark eyes in his house, for his own? Eyes like these are the beginning of a young man's world; they nerve, inspire, arm him, colour his life; he would labour, fight, die for them. It seemed to Weyburn a blessedness even to behold them. So it had been with him at the early stage; and his heart went swifter, memory fetched a breath. Memory quivered eyelids, when the thought returned—of his having known eyes as lustrous. First lights of his world, they had more volume, warmth, mystery—were sweeter. Still, these in the room were sisters to them. They quickened throbs; they seemed a throb of the heart made visible.

That was their endowment of light and lustre simply, and the mystical curve of the lids. For so

they could look only because the heart was disengaged from them. They were but heavenly orbs.

The lady's elbow was on an arm of her chair, her forefinger at her left temple. Her mind was away, one might guess; she could hardly be interested in talk of soldiering and of foreign army systems, jealous English authorities and officials, games, field-sports. She had personal matters to think of.

Adieu until to-morrow to the house she inhabited! The street was a banishment and a relief when Weyburn's first interview with Lord Ormont was over.

He rejoiced to tell his previous anticipations that he had not been disappointed; and he bade hero-worshippers expect no gilded figure. We gather heroes as we go, if we are among the growing: our constancy is shown in the not discarding of our old ones. He held to his earlier hero, though he had seen him, and though he could fancy he saw round him.

Another, too, had been a hero-lover. How did that lady of night's eyes come to fall into her subjection?

He put no question as to the name she bore; it hung in a black suspense—vividly at its blackest

illuminated her possessor. A man is a hero to some effect who wins a woman like this; and, if his glory bespells her, so that she flings all to the winds for him, burns the world; if, for solely the desperate rapture of belonging to him, she consents of her free will to be one of the nameless and discoloured, he shines in a way to make the marrow of men thrill with a burning envy. For that must be the idolatrous devotion desired by them all.

Weyburn struck down upon his man's nature—the bad in us, when beauty of woman is viewed; or say, the old original revolutionary, best kept untouched; for a touch or a meditative pause above him, fetches him up to roam the civilised world devouringly and lawlessly. It is the special peril of the young lover of life, that an inflammability to beauty in women is in a breath intense with him. He is, in truth, a thinly-sealed volcano of our imperishable ancient father, and has it in him to be the multitudinously-amorous of the mythologic Jove. Give him head, he can be civilisation's devil. Is she fair and under a shade?—then is she doubly fair. The shadow about her secretes mystery, just as the forest breeds romance: and mystery is a measureless realm. If we conceive it, we have a mysterious claim on her who is the heart of it.

He marched on that road to the music of sonorous brass for some drunken minutes.

The question came, What of the man who takes advantage of her self-sacrifice?

It soon righted him, and he did Lord Ormont justice, and argued the case against Lady Charlotte's naked hints.

This dark-eyed heroine's bearing was assured, beyond an air of dependency. Her deliberate short nod to him at his leave-taking, and the toneless few words she threw to my lord, signified sufficiently that she did not stand defying the world or dreading it.

She had by miracle the eyes which had once charmed him—could again—would always charm. She reminded him of Aminta Farrell's very eyes under the couchant-dove brows—something of her mouth, the dimple running from a corner. She had, as Aminta had, the self-collected and self-cancelled look, a realm in a look, that was neither depth nor fervour, nor a bestowal, nor an allurement; nor was it an exposure, though there seemed no reserve. One would be near the meaning in declaring it to bewilder men with the riddle of openhandedness. We read it—all may read it—as we read inexplicable plain life; in which let us have a confiding mind, despite the

blows at our heart, and some understanding will enter us.

He shut the door upon picture and speculations, returning to them by another door. The lady had not Aminta's freshness: she might be taken for an elder sister of Aminta. But Weyburn wanted to have her position defined before he set her beside Aminta. He writhed under Lady Charlotte's tolerating scorn of "the young woman." It roused an uneasy sentiment of semi-hostility in the direction of my lord; and he had no personal complaint to make.

Lord Ormont was cordial on the day of the secretary's installation; as if—if one might dare to guess it—some one had helped him to a friendly judgment.

The lady of Aminta's eyes was absent at the luncheon table. She came into the room a step, to speak to Lord Ormont, dressed for a drive to pay a visit.

The secretary was unnoticed.

Lord Ormont put inquiries to him at table, for the why of his having avoided the profession of arms; and apparently considered that the secretary had made a mistake, and that he would have committed a greater error in becoming a soldier—"in

this country." A man with a grievance is illogical under his burden. He mentioned the name "Lady Ormont" distinctly during some remarks on travel. Lady Ormont preferred the Continent.

Two days later she came to the armchair, as before, met Weyburn's eyes when he raised them; gave him no home in hers—not a temporary shelter from the pelting of interrogations. She hardly spoke. Why did she come?

But how was it that he was drawn to think of her? Absent or present, she was round him, like the hills of a valley. She was round his thoughts—caged them; however high, however far they flew, they were conscious of her.

She took her place at the midday meal. She had Aminta's voice in some tones; a mellower than Aminta's—the voice of one of Aminta's family. She had the trick of Aminta's upper lip in speaking. Her look on him was foreign; a civil smile as they conversed. She was very much at home with my lord, whom she rallied for his addiction to his Club at a particular hour of the afternoon. She conversed readily. She reminded him incidentally that her aunt would arrive early next day. He informed her, some time after, of an engagement "to tiffin with a brother officer," and she nodded.

They drove away together while the secretary was at his labour of sorting the heap of autobiographical scraps in a worn dispatch-box, pen and pencil jottings tossed to swell the mass when they had relieved an angry reminiscence. He noticed, heedlessly at the moment, feminine handwriting on some few clear sheets among them.

Next day he was alone in the library. He sat before the box, opened it and searched, merely to quiet his annoyance for having left those sheets of the fair amanuensis unexamined. They were not discoverable. They had gone.

He stood up at the stir of the door. It was she, and she acknowledged his bow; she took her steps to her chair.

He was informed that Lord Ormont had an engagement, and he remarked, "I can do the work very well." She sat quite silent.

He read first lines of the scraps, laid them in various places, as in a preparation for conjurer's tricks at cards; refraining from a glance, lest he should disconcert the eyes he felt to be on him fitfully.

At last she spoke, and he knew Aminta in his hearing and sight.

"Is Emile Grenat still anglomane?"

An instant before her voice was heard he had been persuading himself that the points of unlikeness between his young Aminta and this tall and stately lady of the proud reserve in her bearing flouted the resemblance.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE SHADES OF BROWNY AND MATEY ADVANCE AND RETIRE.

"EMILE is as anglomane as ever, and not a bit less a Frenchman," Weyburn said, in a tone of one who muffles a shock at the heart.

"It would be the poorer compliment to us," she rejoined.

They looked at one another; she dropped her eyelids, he looked away.

She had the grand manner by nature. She was the woman of the girl once known.

"A soldier, is he?"

"Emile's profession and mine are much alike, or will be."

"A secretary?"

Her deadness of accent was not designed to carry her opinion of the post of secretary.

It brought the reply: "We hope to be schoolmasters."

She drew in a breath; there was a thin short

voice, hardly voice, as when one of the unschooled minor feelings has been bruised. After a while she said—

"Does he think it a career?"

"Not brilliant."

"He was formed for a soldier."

"He had to go as the road led."

"A young man renouncing ambition!"

"Considering what we can do best."

"It signifies the taste for what he does."

"Certainly that."

Weyburn had senses to read the word "schoolmaster" in repetition behind her shut mouth. He was sharply sensible of a fall.

The task with his papers occupied him. If he had a wish, it was to sink so low in her esteem as to be spurned. A kick would have been a refreshment. Yet he was unashamed of the cause invoking it. We are instruments to the touch of certain women, and made to play strange tunes.

"Mr. Cuper flourishes?"

"The school exists. I have not been down there. I met Mr. Shalders yesterday. He has left the school."

"You come up from Olmer?"

"I was at Olmer last week, Lady Ormont."

An involuntary beam from her eyes thanked him

for her title at that juncture of the dialogue. She grew more spirited.

"Mr. Shalders has joined the Dragoons, has he?"

"The worthy man has a happy imagination. He goes through a campaign daily."

"It seems to one to dignify his calling."

"I like his enthusiasm."

The lady withdrew into her thoughts; Weyburn fell upon his work.

Mention of the military cloak of enthusiasm covering Shalders, brought the scarce credible old time to smite at his breast, in the presence of these eyes. A ringing of her title of Lady Ormont rendered the present time the incredible.

"I can hardly understand a young Frenchman's not entering the army," she said.

"The Napoleonic legend is weaker now," said he.

"The son of an officer!"

"Grandson."

"It was his choice to be,—he gave it up without reluctance?"

"Emile obeyed the command of his parents," Weyburn answered; and he was obedient to the veiled direction of her remark, in speaking of himself: "I had a reason, too."

"One wonders!"

"It would have impoverished my mother's income to put aside a small allowance for me for years. She would not have hesitated. I then set my mind on the profession of schoolmaster."

"Emile Grenat was a brave boy. Has he no regrets?"

"Neither of us has a regret."

"He began ambitiously."

"It's the way at the beginning."

"It is not usually abjured."

"I'm afraid we neither of us 'dignify our calling' by discontent with it!"

A dusky flush, worth seeing, came on her cheeks. "I respect enthusiasms," she said, and it was as good to him to hear as the begging pardon, though clearly she could not understand enthusiasm for the schoolmaster's career.

Light of evidence was before him, that she had a friendly curiosity to know what things had led to their new meeting under these conditions. He sketched them cursorily; there was little to tell—little, that is, appealing to a romantic mind for interest. Aware of it, by sympathy, he degraded the narrative to a flatness about as cheering as a suburban London Sunday's promenade. Sympathy caused the perverseness. He felt her disillusionment,

felt with it and spread a feast of it. She had to hear of studies at Caen and at a Paris Lycée; French fairly mastered; German, the same; Italian, the same; after studies at Heidelberg, Asti, and Florence; between four and five months at Athens (he was needlessly precise), in tutorship with a young nobleman: no events, nor a spot of colour. Thus did he wilfully, with pain to himself, put an extinguisher on the youth painted brilliant and eminent in a maiden's imagination.

"So there can no longer be thought of the army," she remarked; and the remark had a sort of sigh, though her breathing was equable.

"Unless a big war knocks over all rules and the country comes praying us to serve," he said.

"You would not refuse then?"

"Not in case of need. One may imagine a crisis when they would give commissions to men of my age or older for the cavalry—heavy losses of officers."

She spoke, as if urged by a sting to revert to the distasteful: "That profession—must you not take . . . enter into orders if you would . . . if you aim at any distinction?"

"And a member of the Anglican Church would not be allowed to exchange his frock for a cavalry

sabre," said he. "That is true. I do not propose to settle as a schoolmaster in England."

"Where?"

"On the Continent."

"Would not America be better?"

"It would not so well suit the purpose in view for us."

"There are others besides?"

"Besides Emile, there is a German and an Italian and a Swiss."

"It is a Company?"

"A Company of schoolmasters! Companies of all kinds are forming. Colleges are Companies. And they have their collegians. Our aim is at pupils; we have no ambition for any title higher than School and Schoolmaster; it is not a Company."

So, like Nature parading her skeleton to youthful adorers of her face, he insisted on reducing to hideous material wreck the fair illusion, which had once arrayed him in alluring promise.

She explained: "I said, America. You would be among Protestants in America."

"Catholics and Protestants are both welcome to us, according to our scheme. And Germans, French, English, Americans, Italians, if they will come;

Spaniards and Portuguese, and Scandinavians, Russians as well. And Jews; Mahommedans too, if only they will come! The more mixed, the more it hits our object."

"You have not stated where on the Continent it is to be."

"The spot fixed on is in Switzerland."

"You will have scenery."

"I hold to that, as an influence."

A cool vision of the Bernese Alps encircled the young schoolmaster; and she said, "It would influence girls, I dare say."

"A harder matter with boys, of course—at first. We think we may make it serve."

"And where is the spot? Is that fixed on?"

"Fifteen miles from Berne, on elevated land, neighbouring a water, not quite to be called a lake, unless in an auctioneer's advertisement."

"I am glad of the lake. I could not look on a country home where there was no swimming. You will be head of the school."

"There must be a head.

"Is the school likely to be established soon?"

He fell into her dead tone: "Money is required for establishments. I have a Reversion coming some day; I don't dabble in *post obits.*"

He waited for further questions. They were at an end.

"You have your work to do, Mr. Weyburn."

Saying that, she bowed an implied apology for having kept him from it, and rose. She bowed again as she passed through the doorway, in acknowledgment of his politeness.

Here, then, was the end of the story of Browny and Matey. Such was his thought under the truncheon-stroke of their colloquy. Lines of Browny's letters were fiery waving ribands about him, while the coldly gracious bow of the Lady wrote Finis.

The gulf between the two writings remained unsounded. It gave a heave to the old passion, but stirred no new one; he had himself in hand now, and he shut himself up when the questions bred of amazement buzzed and threatened to storm. After all, what is not curious in this world? The curious thing would be if curious things should fail to happen. Men have been saying it since they began to count and turn corners. And let us hold off from speculating when there is or but seems a shadow of unholiness over that mole-like business. There shall be no questions; and as to feelings, the same. They, if petted for a moment beneath the shadow, corrupt

our blood. Weyburn was a man to have them by the throat at the birth.

Still they thronged; heavy work of strangling had to be done. Her tone of disappointment with the schoolmaster bit him, and it flattered him. The feelings leapt alive, equally venomous from the wound and the caress. They pushed to see, had to be repelled from seeing, the girl Browny in the splendid woman; they had lightning memories: not the pain of his grip could check their voice on the theme touching her happiness or the reverse. And this was an infernal cunning. He paused perforce to inquire, giving them space for the breeding of their multitudes. Was she happy? Did she not seem too meditative, enclosed, toneless, at her age? Vainly the persecuted fellow said to himself: "But what is it to me now?"—The Browny days were over. The passion for the younger Aminta was over—buried; and a dream of power belonging to those days was not yet more than visionary. It had moved her once, when it was a young soldier's. She treated the schoolmaster's dream as vapour, and the old days as dead and ghostless. She did rightly. How could they or she or he be other than they were!

With that sage exclamation, he headed into the Browny days and breasted them; and he had about

him the living foamy sparkle of the very time, until the Countess of Ormont breathed the word "Schoolmaster"; when, at once, it was dusty land where buoyant waters had been, and the armies of the facts, in uniform drab, with some feathers and laces, and a significant surpliced figure, decorously covering the wildest of Cupids, marched the standard of the winking gold-piece, which is their nourishing sun and eclipser of all suns that foster dreams.

As you perceive, he was drawing swiftly to the vortex of the fools, and round and round he went, lucky to float.

His view of the business of the schoolmaster plucked him from the whirl. She despised it; he upheld it. He stuck to his view, finding their antagonism on the subject wholesome for him. All that she succeeded in doing was to rob it of the aurora colour clothing everything on which Matey Weyburn set his aim. Her contempt of it, whether as a profession in itself or as one suitable to the former young enthusiast for arms, dwarfed it to appear like the starved plants under Greenland skies. But those are of a sturdy genus; they mean to live; they live, perforce, of the right to live; they will prove their right in a coming season, when some one steps near and wonders at them, and from more closely observ-

ing, gets to understand, learning that the significance and the charm of earth will be as well shown by them as by her tropical fair flaunters or the tenderly-nurtured exotics.

An unopened coffer of things to be said in defence of—no, on behalf of—no, in honour of the Profession of Schoolmaster, perhaps to the convincing of Aminta, Lady Ormont, was glanced at; a sentence or two leapt out and stepped forward, and had to retire. He preferred to the fathering of tricky, windy phrases, the being undervalued—even by her. He was taught to see again how Rhetoric haunts, and Rhetoric bedevils, the vindication of the clouded, especially in the case of a disesteemed Profession requiring one to raise it and impose it upon the antagonistic senses for the bewildering of the mind. One has to sound it loudly; there is no treating it, as in the advocacy of the cases of flesh and blood, with the masterly pathos of designed simplicity. And Weyburn was Cuper's Matey Weyburn still in his loathing of artifice to raise emotion, loathing of the affected, the stilted, the trumpet of speech—always excepting school-exercises in the tongues, the unmasking of a Catiline, the address of a General, Athenian or other, to troops.

He kept his coffer shut; and, for a consequence,

he saw the contents as an avenue of blossom leading to vistas of infinite harvest.

She was Lady Ormont: Aminta shared the title of his old hero! He refused to speculate upon how it had come to pass, and let the curtain hang, though dramas and romances, with the miracles involved in them, were agitated by a transient glimpse at the curtain.

Well! and he hoped to be a member of the Profession she despised: hoped it with all his heart. And one good effect of his giving his heart to the hope was, that he could hold from speculating and from feeling, even from pausing to wonder at the most wonderful turn of events. Blessed antagonism drove him to be braced by thoughts upon the hardest of the schoolmaster's tasks—bright winter thoughts, prescribing to him satisfaction with a faith in the sowing, which may be his only reaping. Away fly the boys in sheaves. After his toil with them, to instruct, restrain, animate, point their minds, they leave him, they plunge into the world and are gone. Will he see them again? It is a flickering perhaps. To sustain his belief that he has done serviceable work, he must be sure of his having charged them with good matter. How can the man do it, if, during his term of apprenticeship, he has allowed himself to

dally here and there, down to moony dreamings over inscrutable beautiful eyes of a married lady; for the sole reason that he meets her unexpectedly, after an exchange of letters with her in long-past days at school, when she was an inexperienced girl, who knew not what she vowed, and he a flighty-headed youngster, crying out to be the arrow of any bow that was handy? Yes, she was once that girl, named Browny by the boys.

Temptation threw warm light on the memory, and very artfully, by conjuring up the faces, cries, characters, all the fun of the boys. There was no possibility of forgetting her image in those days; he had, therefore, to live with it and to live near the grown woman—Time's present answer to the old riddle. It seemed to him, that instead of sorting Lord Ormont's papers, he ought to be at sharp exercise. According to his prescript, sharp exercise of lungs and limbs is a man's moral aid against temptation. He knew it as the one trusty antidote for him, who was otherwise the vessel of a temperament pushing to mutiny. Certainly it is the best philosophy youth can pretend to practise; and Lord Ormont kept him from it! Worse than that, the slips and sheets of paper in the dispatch-box were not an exercise of the mind even; there was nothing to

grapple with—no diversion; criticism passed by them indulgently, if not benevolently.

Quite apart from the subject inscribed on them, Weyburn had now and again a blow at the breast, of untraceable origin. For he was well enough aware that the old days when Browny imagined him a hero, in drinking his praises of a brighter, were drowned. They were dead; but here was she the bride of the proved hero. His praises might have helped in causing her willingness—devotional readiness, he could fancy—to yield her hand. Perhaps at the moment when the hero was penning some of the Indian slips here, the boy at school was preparing Aminta; but he could not be responsible for a sacrifice of the kind suggested by Lady Charlotte. And no, there had been no such sacrifice, although Lord Ormont's inexplicable treatment of his young countess, under cover of his notorious reputation with women, conduced to the suspicion.

While the vagrant in Weyburn was thus engaged, his criticism of the soldier-lord's field-English on paper let the stuff go tolerantly unexamined, but with a degree of literary contempt at heart for the writer who had that woman-scented reputation and expressed himself so poorly. The sentiment was outside of reason. We do, nevertheless, expect our

Don Juans to deliver their minds a trifle elegantly, if not in classic English, on paper; and when we find one of them inflicting cruelty, as it appears, and the victim is a young woman, a beautiful young woman, she pleads to us poetically against the bearish sentences of his composition. We acknowledge, however, that a mere sentiment, entertained possibly by us alone, should not be permitted to condemn him unheard.

Lady Ormont was not seen again. After luncheon at a solitary table, the secretary worked till winter's lamps were lit; and then shone freedom, with assurance to him that he would escape from the miry mental ditch he had been floundering in since Aminta revealed herself. Sunday was the glorious day to follow, with a cleansing bath of a walk along the southern hills; homely English scenery to show to a German friend, one of his "Company." Half a dozen good lads were pledged to the walk; bearing which in view, it could be felt that this nonsensical puzzlement over his relations to the moods and tenses of a married woman would be bounced out of recollection before nightfall. The landscape given off any of the airy hills of Surrey would suffice to do it.

A lady stood among her boxes below, as he

descended the stairs to cross the hall. He knew her for the person Lady Charlotte called "the woman's aunt," whom Lord Ormont could not endure—a forgiven old enemy, Mrs. Nargett Pagnell.

He saluted. She stared, and corrected her incivility with "Ah, yes," and a formal smile.

If not accidentally delayed on her journey, she had been needlessly the cause why Lord Ormont hugged his Club during the morning and afternoon. Weyburn was pushed to think of the matter by remembrance of his foregone resentment at her having withdrawn Aminta from Miss Vincent's three days earlier than the holiday time. The resentment was over; but a germ of it must have sprung from the dust to prompt the kindling leap his memory took, out of all due connection, like a lightning among the crags. It struck Aminta smartly. He called to mind the conversation at table yesterday. Had she played on Lord Ormont's dislike of the aunt to drive him forth for some purpose of her own? If so, the little trick had been done with deplorable spontaneity or adeptness of usage. What was the purpose?—to converse with an old acquaintance, undisturbed by Lord Ormont and her aunt? Neatly done, supposing the surmise correct.

But what was there in the purpose? He sifted

rapidly for the gist of the conversation; reviewed the manner of it, the words, the sound they had, the feelings they touched; then owned that the question could not be answered. Owning, further, that the recurrence of these idiotic speculations, feelings, questions, wrote him down as both dull fellow and impertinent, he was enabled to restore Aminta to the queenly place she took above the schoolmaster, who was very soon laughing at his fever or flush of the afternoon. The day had brought a great surprise, nothing more. Twenty minutes of fencing in the *salle d'armes* of an Italian captain braced him to health, and shifted scenes of other loves, lighter loves, following the Browny days—not to be called loves; in fact, hardly beyond inclinations. Nevertheless, inclinations are an infidelity. To meet a married woman, and be mooning over her because she gave him her eyes and her handwriting when a girl, was enough to rouse an honest fellow's laugh at himself, in the contemplation of his intermediate amorous vagabondage. Had he ever known the veritable passion after Browny sank from his ken? Let it be confessed, never. His first love was his only true love, despite one shuddering episode, oddly humiliating to recollect, though he had not behaved badly. So, then, by right of his passion, thus did eternal

justice rule it: that Browny belonged to Matey Weyburn, Aminta to Lord Ormont. Aminta was a lady blooming in the flesh, Browny was the past's pale phantom; for which reason he could call her his own, without harm done to any one, and with his usual appetite for dinner, breakfast, lunch, whatever the meal supplied by the hour.

It would somewhat alarmingly have got to Mr. Weyburn's conscience through a disturbance of his balance, telling him that he was on a perilous road, if his relish for food had been blunted. He had his axiom on the subject, and he was wrong in the general instance, for the appetites of rogues and ogres are not known to fail. As regarded himself, he was eminently right; and he could apply it to boys also, to all young people—the unlaunched, he called them. He counted himself among the launched, no doubt, and had breasted seas; but the boy was alive, a trencherman lad, in the coming schoolmaster, and told him profitable facts concerning his condition, besides throwing a luminous ray on the arcana of our elusive youthful. If they have no stout zest for eating, put QUERY against them.

His customary enjoyment of dinner convinced Mr. Weyburn that he had not brooded morbidly over his phantom Browny, and could meet Aminta, Countess

of Ormont, on the next occasion with the sentiments proper to a common official. Did she not set him a commendable example? He admired her for not concealing her disdain of the aspirant schoolmaster, quite comprehending, by sympathy, why the woman should reproach the girl who had worshipped heroes, if this was a full-grown specimen; and the reply of the shamed girl, that in her ignorance she could not know better. He spared the girl, but he laughed at the woman he commended, laughed at himself.

Aminta's humour was being stirred about the same time. She and her aunt were at the dinner-table in the absence of my lord. The dinner had passed with the stiff dialogue peculiar to couples under supervision of their inferiors; and, as soon as the room was clear, she had asked her aunt, touching the secretary: "Have you seen him?"

Mrs. Nargett Pagnell's answer could have been amusing only to one whose intimate knowledge of her found it characteristically salt; for she was a lady of speech addressed ever directly or roundabout to the chief point of business between herself and her hearer, and the more she was brief, oblique, far-shooting, the more comically intelligible she was to her niece. She bent her head to signify that she

had seen the secretary, and struck the table with both hands, exclaiming:

"Well, to be sure, Lord Ormont!"

Their discussion, before they descended the stairs to dinner, concerned his lordship's extraordinary indifference to the thronging of handsome young men around his young countess.

Here, the implication ran, is one established in the house.

Aminta's thoughts could be phrased: "Yes, that is true, for one part of it."

As for the other part, the ascent of a Phœbus Apollo, with his golden bow and quiver off the fairest of Eastern horizon skies, followed suddenly by the sight of him toppling over in Mr. Cuper's long-skirted brown coat, with spectacles and cane, is an image that hardly exceeds the degradation she conceived. It was past ludicrous; yet admitted of no woefulness, nothing soothingly pathetic. It smothered and barked at the dreams of her blooming spring of life, to which her mind had latterly been turning back, for an escape from sour, one may say cynical, reflections, the present issue of a beautiful young woman's first savour of battle with the world.

CHAPTER VI.

IN A MOOD OF LANGUOR.

Up in Aminta's amber dressing-room, Mrs. Nargett Pagnell alluded sadly to the long month of separation, and begged her niece to let her have in plain words an exact statement of the present situation; adding, "Items will do." Thereupon she slipped into prattle and held the field.

She was the known, worthy, good, intolerable woman whom the burgess turns out for his world in regiments, that do and look and all but step alike; and they mean well, and have conventional worships and material aspirations, and very peculiar occult refinements, with a blind head and a haphazard gleam of acuteness, impressive to acquaintances, convincing themselves that they impersonate sagacity. She had said this, done that; and it was, by proof, Providence consenting, the right thing. A niece, written down in her girlhood, because of her eyes and her striking air and excellent deportment, as mate for a nobleman, marries him before she is out

of her teens. "I said, 'She shall be a countess.'" A countess she is. Providence does not comply with our predictions in order to stultify us. Admitting the position of affairs for the moment as extraordinary, we are bound by what has happened to expect they will be conformable in the end. Temporarily warped, we should say of them.

She could point to the reason: it was Lord Ormont's blunt misunderstanding of her character. The burgess's daughter was refining to an appreciation of the exquisite so rapidly that she could criticise patricians. My lord had never forgiven her for correcting him in his pronunciation of her name by marriage. Singular indeed; but men, even great men, men of title, are so, some of them, whom you could least suspect of their being so. He would speak the "g" in Nargett, and he declined—after a remonstrance he declined—to pass Pagnell under the cedilla. Lord Ormont spoke the name like a man hating it, or an English rustic: "Nargett Pagnell," instead of the soft and elegant "Naryett Pagñell," the only true way of speaking it; and she had always taken that pronunciation of her name for a test of people's breeding. The expression of his lordship's countenance under correction was

memorable. Naturally, in those honeymoony days, the young Countess of Ormont sided with her husband the earl; she declared that her aunt had never dreamed of the cedilla before the expedition to Spain. When, for example, Alfred Nargett Pagnell had a laughing remark, which Aminta in her childhood must have heard: "We rhyme with spaniel!"

That was the secret of Lord Ormont's prepossession against Aminta's aunt; and who can tell? perhaps of much of his behaviour to the beautiful young wife he at least admired, sincerely admired, though he caused her to hang her head—cast a cloud on the head so dear to him!

Otherwise there was no interpreting his lordship. To think of herself as personally disliked by a nobleman stupefied Mrs. Pagnell, from her just expectation of reciprocal dealings in high society; for she confessed herself a fly to a title. Where is the shame, if titles are created to attract? Elsewhere than in that upper circle, we may anticipate hard bargains; the widow of a solicitor had not to learn it. But when a distinguished member and ornament of the chosen seats above blew cold upon their gesticulatory devotee, and was besides ungrateful, she was more than commonly assured of his being, as she called

him, "a sphinx." His behaviour to his legally-wedded wife confirmed the charge.

She checked her flow to resume the question. "So, then, where are we now? He allows you liberally for pin-money in addition to your own small independent income. Satisfaction with that would warrant him to suppose his whole duty done by you."

"We are where we were, aunty; the month has made no change," said Aminta, in languor.

"And you as patient as ever?"

"I am supposed to have everything a woman can require."

"Can he possibly think it? And I have to warn you, child, that lawyers are not so absolving as the world is with some of the ladies Lord Ormont allows you to call your friends. I have been hearing—it is not mere airy tales one hears from lawyers about cases in Courts of Law. Tighten your lips as you like; I say nothing to condemn or reflect on Mrs. Lawrence Finchley. I have had my eyes a little opened, that is all. Oh, I know my niece Aminta, when it's a friend to stand by; but our position—thanks to your inscrutable lord and master—demands of us the utmost scrupulousness, or it soon becomes a whirl and scandal flying about, and those lawyers

picking up and putting together. I have had a difficulty to persuade them! . . . and my own niece! whom I saw married at the British Embassy in Madrid, as I take good care to tell everybody; for it was my doing; I am the responsible person! and by an English Protestant clergyman, to all appearance able to walk erect in and out of any of these excellent new Life Assurance offices they are starting for the benefit of widows and orphans, and deceased within six days of the ceremony—if ceremony one may call the hasty affair in those foreign places. My dear, the instant I heard it I had a presentiment, 'All has gone well up to now.' I remember murmuring the words. Then your letter, received in that smelly Barcelona: Lord Ormont was carrying you off to Granada—a dream of my infancy! It may not have been his manœuvre, but it was the beginning of his manœuvres."

Aminta shuddered. "And tra-la-la, and castañets, and my Cid! my Cid! and the Alhambra, the Sierra Nevada, and ay di me, Alhama; and Boabdil el Chico and el Zagal and Fray Antonio Agapida!" She flung out the rattle, yawning, with her arms up and her head back, in the posture of a woman wounded. One of her aunt's chance shots had traversed her breast, flashing at her the time, the

scene, the husband, intensest sunniness on sword-edges of shade,—and now the wedded riddle, illusion dropping mask, romance in its anatomy, cold English mist. Ah, what a background is the present when we have the past to the fore! That filmy past is diaphanous on heaving ribs.

She smiled at the wide-eyed little gossip. "Don't speak of manœuvres, dear aunt. And we'll leave Granada to the poets. I'm tired. Talk of our own people, on your side and my father's, and as much as you please of the Pagnell-Pagñells, they refresh me. Do they go on marrying?"

"Why, my child, how could they go on without it?"

Aminta pressed her hands at her eyelids. "Oh, me!" she sighed, feeling the tear come with a sting from checked laughter. "But there are marriages, aunty, that don't go on, though Protestant clergymen officiated. Leave them unnoticed, I have really nothing to tell."

"You have not heard anything of Lady Eglett?"

"Lady Charlotte Eglett? No syllable. Or wait—my lord's secretary was with her at Olmer; approved by her, I have to suppose."

"There, my dear, I say again I do dread that woman, if she can make a man like Lord Ormont

afraid of her. And no doubt she is of our old aristocracy. And they tell me she is coarse in her conversation—like a man. Lawyers tell me she is never happy but in litigation. Years back, I am given to understand, she did not set so particularly good an example. Lawyers hear next to everything. I am told she lifted her horsewhip on a gentleman once, and then put her horse at him and rode him down. You will say, the sister of your husband. No; not to make my niece a countess, would I, if I had known the kind of family! Then one asks, Is she half as much afraid of him? In that case, no wonder they have given up meeting. Was formerly one of the Keepsake Beauties. Well, Lady Eglett, and Aminta, Countess of Ormont, will be in that Peerage, as they call it, let her only have her dues. My dear, I would—if I ever did—swear the woman is jealous."

"Of me, aunty!"

"I say more; I say again, it would be a good thing for somebody if somebody had his twitch of jealousy. Wives may be too meek. Cases and cases my poor Alfred read to me, where an ill-behaving man was brought to his senses by a clever little shuffle of the cards, and by the most innocent of wives. A kind of poison to him, of course; but

there are poisons that cure. It might come into the courts; and the nearer the proofs the happier he in withdrawing from his charge and effecting a reconciliation. Short of guilt, of course. Men are so strange. Imagine now, if a handsome young woman were known to be admired rather more than enough by a good-looking gentleman near about her own age. Oh, I've no patience with the man for causing us to think and scheme! Only there are men who won't be set right unless we do. My husband used to say, change is such a capital thing in life's jog-trot, that men find it refreshing if we now and then reverse the order of our pillion-riding for them. A spiritless woman in a wife is what they bear least of all. Anything rather. Is Mr. Morsfield haunting Mrs. Lawrence Finchley's house as usual?"

Aminta's cheeks unrolled their deep damask rose at the abrupt intrusion of the name. "I meet him there."

"Lord Adderwood, Sir John Randeller, and the rest?"

"Two or three times a week."

"And the lady, wife of the captain, really a Lady Fair—Mrs. . . . month of May: so I have to get at it."

"She may be seen there."

"Really a contrast, when you two are together! As to reputation, there is an exchange of colours. Those lawyers hold the keys of the great world, and a naughty world it is, I fear—with exceptions, who are the salt, but don't taste so much. I can't help enjoying the people at Mrs. Lawrence Finchley's. I like to feel I can amuse them, as they do me. One puzzles for what they say—in somebody's absence, I mean. They must take Lord Ormont for a perfect sphinx; unless they are so silly as to think they may despise him, or suppose him indifferent. Oh, that upper class! It's a garden, and we can't help pushing to enter it; and fair flowers, indeed, but serpents too, like the tropics. It tries us more than anything else in the world—well, just as good eating tries the constitution. He ought to know it and feel it, and give his wife all the protection of his name, instead of—not that he denies: I have brought him to that point; he cannot deny it with me. But not to present her—to shun the Court; not to introduce her to his family, to appear ashamed of her! My darling Aminta, a month of absence for reflection on your legally-wedded husband's conduct increases my astonishment. For usually men old enough to be the grandfathers of their wives——"

"Oh, pray, aunty, pray, pray!" Aminta cried,

and her body writhed. "No more to-night. You mean well, I am sure. Let us wait. I shall sleep, perhaps, if I go to bed early. I dare say I am spiritless—not worth more than I get. I gave him the lead altogether; he keeps it. In everything else he is kind; I have all the luxuries—enough to loathe them. Kiss me and say good night."

Aminta made it imperative by rising. Her aunt stood up, kissed, and exclaimed, "I tell you you are a queenly creature, not to be treated as any puny trollop of a handmaid. And although he is a great nobleman, he is not to presume to behave any longer, my dear, as if your family had no claim on his consideration. My husband, Alfred Pagnell, would have laid that before him pretty quick. You are the child of the Farrells and the Solers, both old families; on your father's side you are linked with the oldest nobility in Europe. It flushes one to think of it! Your grandmother, marrying Captain Algernon Farrell, was the legitimate daughter of a Grandee of Spain, as I have told Lord Ormont often, and I defy him to equal that for a romantic marriage in the annals of his house, or boast of bluer blood. Again, the Solers——"

"We take the Solers for granted, aunty, good night."

"Commoners, if you like; but established since the Conquest. That is, we trace the pedigree. And to be treated, even by a great nobleman, as if we were stuff picked up out of the ditch! I declare, there are times when I sit and think and boil. Is it chivalrous, is it generous—is it, I say, decent—is it what Alfred would have called a fair fulfilment of a pact, for your wedded husband—? You may close my mouth! But he pretends to be chivalrous and generous, and he has won a queen any wealthy gentleman in England—I know of one, if not two—would be proud to have beside him in equal state; and what is he to her? He is an extinguisher. Or is it the very meanest miserliness, that he may keep you all to himself? There we are again! I say he is an unreadable sphinx."

Aminta had rung the bell for her maid. Mrs. Pagnell could be counted on for drawing in her tongue when the domestics were near.

A languor past delivery in sighs was on the young woman's breast. She could have heard without a regret that the heart was to cease beating. Had it been downright misery she would have looked about her with less of her exanimate glassiness. The unhappy have a form of life: until they are worn out, they feel keenly. She felt nothing. The blow to

her pride of station and womanhood struck on numbed sensations. She could complain that the blow was not heavier.

A letter lying in her jewel-box called her to read it, for the chance of some slight stir. The contents were known. The signature of Adolphus Morsfield had a new meaning for her eyes, and dashed her at her husband in a spasm of revolt and wrath against the man exposing her to these letters, which a motion of her hand could turn to blood, and abstention from any sign maintained in a Satanic whisper, saying, "Here lies one way of solving the riddle." It was her husband who drove her to look that way.

The look was transient, and the wrath: she could not burn. A small portion of contempt lodged in her mind to shadow husbands precipitating women on their armoury for a taste of vengeance. Women can always be revenged—so speedily, so completely: they have but to dip. Husbands driving wives to taste their power execrate the creature for her fall deep downward. They are forgetful of causes.

Does it matter? Aminta's languor asked. The letter had not won a reply. Thought of the briefest of replies was a mountain of effort, and she moaned at her nervelessness in body and mind. To reply,

to reproach the man, to be flame—an image of herself under the form she desired—gave her a momentary false energy, wherein the daring of the man, whose life was at a toss for the writing of this letter, hung lighted. She had therewith a sharp vision of his features, repellent in correctness, Greek in lines, with close eyes, hollow temples, pressed lips—a face indicating the man who can fling himself on a die. She had heard tales of women and the man. Some had loved him, report said. Here were words to say that he loved her. They might, poor man, be true. Otherwise she had never been loved.

Memory had of late been paying visits to a droopy plant in the golden summer drought on a gorgeous mid-sea island, and had taken her on board to refresh her with voyages, always bearing down full sail on a couple of blissful schools, abodes of bloom and briny vigour, sweet merriment, innocent longings, dreams the shyest, dreams the mightiest. At night before sleep, at morn before rising, often during day, and when vexed or when dispirited, she had issued her command for the voyage. Sheer refreshment followed, as is ever the case if our vessel carries no freight of hopes. There could be no hopes. It was forgotten that they had ever been seriously alive.

But it carried an admiration. Now, an admiration may endure, and this one had been justified all round. The figure heroical, the splendid, active youth, hallowed Aminta's past. The past of a bitterly humiliated Aminta was a garden in the coming kiss of sunset, with that godlike figure of young manhood to hallow it. There he stayed, perpetually assuring her of his triumphs to come.

She could have no further voyages. Ridicule convulsed her home of refuge. For the young soldier-hero to be unhorsed by misfortune, was one thing; but the meanness of the ambition he had taken in exchange for the thirst of glory, accused his nature. He so certainly involved her in the burlesque of the transformation that she had to quench memory.

She was, therefore, having smothered a good part of herself, accountably languid—a condition alternating with fire in Aminta; and as Mr. Morsfield's letter supplied the absent element, her needy instinct pushed her to read his letter through. She had not yet done that with attention.

Whether a woman loves a man or not, he is her lover if he dare tell her he loves her, and is heard with attention. Aware that the sentences were poison, she summoned her constitutional antagonism to the

mad step proposed, so far nullifying the virus as to make her shrink from the madness. Even then her soul cried out to her husband, Who drives me to read? or rather, to brood upon what she read. The brooding ensued, was the thirst of her malady. The best antidote she could hit on was the writer's face. Yet it expressed him, his fire and his courage—gifts she respected in him, found wanting in herself. Read by Lord Ormont, this letter would mean a deadly thing.

Aminta did her lord the justice to feel sure of him, that with her name bearing the superscription, it might be left on her table, and would not have him to peruse it. If he manœuvred, it was never basely. Despite resentment, her deepest heart denied his being indifferent either to her honour or his own in relation to it. He would vindicate both at a stroke, for a sign. Nevertheless, he had been behaving cruelly. She charged on him the guilt of the small preludes, archeries, anglings, veilings, evasions, all done with the eyelids and the mute of the lips, or a skirmisher word or a fan's flourish, and which, intended to pique the husband rather than incite the lover, had led Mrs. Lawrence Finchley to murmur at her ear, in close assembly, without a distinct designation of Mr. Morsfield, "Dangerous man to play little

games with!" It had brought upon her this letter of declaration, proposal, entreaty.

This letter was the man's life in her hands, and safe, of course. But surely it was a proof that the man loved her?

Aminta was in her five-and-twentieth year; when the woman who is uncertain of the having been loved, and she reputed beautiful, desirable, is impelled by a sombre necessity to muse on a declaration, and nibble at an idea of a test. If "a dangerous man to play little games with," he could scarcely be dangerous to a woman having no love for him at all. It meant merely that he would soon fall to writing letters like this, and he could not expect an answer to it. But her heart really thanked him, and wished the poor gentleman to take its dumb response as his reward, for being the one sole one who had loved her.

Aminta dwelt on "the one sole one." Lord Ormont's treatment had detached her from any belief in love on his part; and the schoolboy, now ambitious to become a schoolmaster, was behind the screen unlikely to be lifted again by a woman valuing her pride of youth, though he had—behold our deceptions!—the sympathetic face entirely absent from

that of Mr. Adolphus Morsfield, whom the world would count quite as handsome—nay, it boasted him. He enjoyed the reputation of a killer of ladies. Women have odd tastes, Aminta thought, and examined the gentleman's handwriting. It pleased her better. She studied it till the conventional phrases took a fiery hue, and came at her with an invasive rush.

The letter was cast back into the box, locked up; there an end to it, or no interdiction of sleep.

Sleep was a triumph. Aminta's healthy frame rode her over petty agitations of a blood uninflamed, as lightly as she swam the troubled sea-waters her body gloried to cleave. She woke in the morning peaceful and mildly reflective, like one who walks across green meadows. Only by degrees, by glimpses, was she drawn to remember the trotting, cantering, galloping, leaping of an active heart during night. We cannot, man or woman, control the heart in sleep at night. There had been wild leapings. Night will lead an unsatisfied heart of a woman, by way of sleep, to scale black mountains, jump jagged chasms. Sleep is a horse that laughs at precipices and abysses. We bid women, moreover, be all heart. They are to cultivate their hearts, pay much heed to their hearts. The vast realm of feeling is open to these

appointed keepers of the sanctuary household, who may be withering virgins, may be childless matrons, may be unhusbanded wives. Wandering in the vast realm which they are exhorted to call their own, for the additional attractiveness it gives them, an unsatisfied heart of woman will somewhat audaciously cross the borderland a single step into the public road of the vast realm of thinking. Once there, and but a single step on the road, she is a rebel against man's law for her sex. Nor is it urgent on her that she should think defiantly in order to feel herself the rebel. She may think submissively, with a heart (the enlarged, the scientifically plumped, the pasture of epicurean man), with her coveted heart in revolt, and from the mere act of thinking at all.

Aminta reviewed perforce, dead against her will, certain of the near-to-happiness racings over-night. She thinned her lips, and her cheeks glowed. An arm, on the plea of rescuing, had been round her. The choice now offered her was, to yield to softness or to think. She took the latter step, the single step of an unaccustomed foot, which women educated simply to feel, will, upon extreme impulsion, take; and it held a candle in a windy darkness. She saw no Justice there. The sensational immensity touched sublime, short of that spirit of Justice required for

the true sublime. And void of Justice, what a sunless place is any realm! Infants, the male and the female alike, first begin to know they feel when it is refused them. When they know they feel, they have begun to reflect. The void of Justice is a godless region. Women, to whom the solitary thought has come as a blown candle, illumining the fringes of their storm, ask themselves whether they are God's creatures or man's. The question deals a sword-stroke of division between them and their human masters. Young women, animated by the passions their feeling bosoms of necessity breed, and under terror discover, do not distinguish an abstract justice from a concrete. They are of the tribe too long hereditarily enslaved to conceive an abstract. So it is with them, that their God is the God of the slave, as it is with all but the bravest of boys. He is a Thing to cry to, a Punisher, not much of a Supporter—the Biblical Hebrew's right reading of Nature, favouring man, yet prompt to confound him, and with woman for the instrument of vengeance. By such a maze the blindfolded are brought round to see Justice on earth. If women can only believe in some soul of justice, they will feel they belong to God—of the two; and the peril for them then is, that they will set the one incomprehensible Power

in opposition to the other, urging their unsatisfied natures to make secret appeal away from man and his laws altogether, at the cost of losing clear sight of the God who shines in thought. It is a manner whereby the desperately harried among these creatures of the petted heart arrive upon occasion at an agreeable, almost reposeful, contemplation of the reverse of God.

There is little pleasure to be on the lecture-rostrum for a narrator sensible to the pulses of his audience. Justice compels at times. In truth, there are times when the foggy obscurities of the preacher are by comparison broad daylight beside the whirling loose tissues of a woman unexplained. Aminta was one born to prize rectitude, to walk on the traced line uprightly; and while the dark rose overflowed the soft brown of her cheeks, under musings upon her unlicensed heart's doings over-night, she not only pleaded for woeful creatures of her sex burdened as she and erring, she weighed them in the scales with men, and put her heart where Justice pointed, sending men to kick aloft.

Her husband, the man-riddle: she was unable to rede or read him. Her will could not turn him, nor her tongue combat; nor was it granted her to pique the mailed veteran. Every poor innocent little

bit of an art had been exhausted. Her title was Lady Ormont: her condition actually slave. A luxuriously established slave, consorting with a singularly enfranchised set,—as, for instance, Mrs. Lawrence Finchley and Lord Adderwood; Sir John Randeller and Lady Staines; Mrs. May, Amy May, notorious wife of a fighting captain, the loveliest of blondes; and other ladies, other gentlemen, Mr. Morsfield in the list, paired or not yet paired: gossip raged. Aminta was of a disposition too generously cordial to let her be the rigorous critic of people with whom she was in touch. But her mind knew relief when she recollected that her humble little school-mate, Selina Collett, who had suffered on her behalf in old days, was coming up to her from the Suffolk coast on a visit for a week. However much a slave and an unloved woman, she could be a constant and protecting friend. Besides, Lord Ormont was gracious to little Selina. She thought of his remarks about the modest-minded girl after first seeing her. From that she struck upon a notion of reserves of humaneness being in him, if she might find the path to them: and thence, fortified by the repose her picture of little Selina's merit had bestowed, she sprang to the idea of valiancy, that she would woo him to listen to her, without inflicting a

scene. He had been a listening lover, seeming lover, once, later than the Granada sunsets. The letter in her jewel-box urged Aminta to clear her conscience by some means, for leaving it unburnt.

CHAPTER VII.

EXHIBITS EFFECTS OF A PRATTLER'S DOSES.

THE rules in Lord Ormont's household assisted to shelter him for some hours of the day from the lady who was like a blast of sirocco under his roof. He had his breakfast alone, as Lady Charlotte had it at Olmer; a dislike of a common table in the morning was a family trait with both. At ten o'clock the secretary arrived, and they were shut up together. At the luncheon table Aminta usually presided. If my lord dined at home, he had by that time established an equanimity rendering his constant civility to Mrs. Pagnell less arduous. The presence of a woman of tongue, perpetually on the spring to gratify him and win him, was among the burdens he bore for his Aminta.

Mrs. Pagnell soon perceived that the secretary was in favour. My lord and this Mr. Weyburn had their pet themes of conversation, upon which the wary aunt of her niece did not gaze like the wintry sun with the distant smile her niece displayed over

discussions concerning military biographies, Hannibal's use of his elephants and his Numidian horse, the Little St. Bernard, modern artillery, ancient slingers, English and Genoese bowmen, Napoleon's tactics, his command to the troopers to "give point," and English officers' neglect of sword exercise, and the "devil of a day" Old England is to have on a day to come. My lord connected our day of trial with India. Mrs. Pagnell assumed an air of studious interest; she struck in to give her niece a lead, that Lord Ormont might know his countess capable of joining the driest of subjects occupying exalted minds. Aminta did not follow her; and she was extricated gallantly by the gentlemen in turn.

The secretary behaved with a pretty civility. Aminta shook herself to think tolerantly of him when he, after listening to the suggestion, put interrogatively, that we should profit by Hannibal's example and train elephants to serve as a special army corps for the perfect security of our priceless Indian Empire, instanced the danger likely to result from their panic fear of cannon, and forbore to consult Lord Ormont's eye.

Mrs. Pagnell knew that she had put her foot into it; but women advised of being fools in what they say, are generally sustained by their sense of

the excellent motive which impelled them. Even to the Countess of Ormont, she could have replied, "We might have given them a higher idea of us"—if, that meant, the Countess of Ormont had entered the field beside her, to the exclusion of a shrinking Aminta. She hinted as much subsequently, and Aminta's consciousness of the truth was touched. The young schoolmaster's company sat on her spirits, deadened her vocabulary. Her aunt spoke of passing the library door and hearing the two gentlemen loudly laughing. It seemed subserviency on the fallen young hero's part. His tastes were low. He frequented the haunts of boxing men; her lord informed her of his having made, or of his making, matches to run or swim or walk certain distances against competitors or within a given time. He had also half a dozen boys or more in tow, whom he raced out of town on Sundays; a nucleus of the school he intended to form.

But will not Achilles become by comparison a common rushlight where was a blazing torch, if we see him clap a clown's cap on the head whose golden helm was fired by Pallas?

Nay, and let him look the hero still: all the more does he point finger on his meanness of nature.

Turning to another, it is another kind of shame

that a woman feels, if she consents to an exchange of letters—shameful indeed, but not such a feeling of deadly sickness as comes with the humiliating view of an object of admiration degraded. Bad she may be; and she may be deceived, vilely treated, in either case. And what is a woman's pride but the staff and banner of her soul, beyond all gifts? He who wounds it cannot be forgiven—never!—he has killled the best of her. Aminta found herself sliding along into the sentiment, that the splendid idol of a girl's worship is, if she discover him in the lapse of years as an infinitesimally small one, responsible for the woman's possible reckless fit of giddiness. And she could see her nonsense; she could not correct it. Lines of the letters under signature of Adolphus were phosphorescent about her: they would recur; and she charged their doing so on the discovered meanness of the girl's idol. Her wicked memory was caused by his having plunged her low.

Mrs. Pagnell performed the offices of attention to Mr. Weyburn in lieu of the countess, who seemed to find it a task to sit at the luncheon table with him, when Lady Ormont was absent. "Just peeped in," she said as she entered the library, "to see if all was comfortable;" and gossip ensued, not devoid of object. She extracted an astonishingly smooth

description of Lady Charlotte. Weyburn was brightness in speaking of the much-misunderstood lady. "She's one of the *living* women of the world."

"You are sure you don't mean one of the worldly women?" Mrs. Pagnell rejoined.

"She has to be known to be liked," he owned.

"And you were, one hears, among the favoured?"

"I can scarcely pretend to that, ma'am."

"You were recommended."

"Lady Charlotte is devoted to her brother."

Mrs. Pagnell's bosom heaved. "How strange Lord Ormont is! One would suppose, with his indignation at the country for its treatment of him, admirers would be welcome. Oh dear, no! that is not the way. On board the packet, on our voyage to Spain, my niece in her cabin, imploring mercy of Neptune, as they say, I heard of Lord Ormont among the passengers. I could hardly credit my ears. For I had been hearing of him from my niece ever since her return from a select establishment for the education of young ladies, not much more than a morning's drive out of London, though Dover was my residence. She had got a hero! It was Lord Ormont! Lord Ormont! all day: and when the behaviour of the country to him became notorious, Aminta—my niece the countess—she could hardly

contain herself. A secret:—I promised her—it's not known to Lord Ormont himself:—a printed letter in a metropolitan paper, copied into the provincial papers, upholding him for one of the greatest of our patriot soldiers and the saviour of India, was the work of her hands. You would, I am sure, think it really well written. Meeting him on deck—the outline of the coast of Portugal for an introductory subject, our Peninsular battles and so forth—I spoke of her enthusiasm. The effect was, to cut off all communication between us. I had only to appear, Lord Ormont vanished. I said to myself, this is a character. However, the very mention of him to my niece, as one of the passengers on board—medicine, miraculous! She was up in half an hour, out pacing the deck before evening, hardly leaning on my arm, and the colour positively beginning to show on her cheeks again. He fled, of course. I had prepared her for his eccentricities. Next morning she was out by herself. In the afternoon Lord Ormont strode up to us—his military step—and most courteously requested the honour of an introduction. I had broken the ice at last; from that moment he was cordiality itself, until—I will not say, until he had called her his own—a few little misunderstandings! —not with his countess. You see, a resident aunt

is translated mother-in-law by husbands; though I spare them pretty frequently; I go to friends, they travel. Here in London she must have a *dueña*.—The marriage at Madrid, at the Embassy:—well, perhaps it was a step for us, for commoners, though we rank with the independent. Has her own little pin-money—an inheritance. Perhaps Lady Eglett gives the world her version. She may say, there was aiming at station. I reply, never was there a more whole-hearted love-match! Absolutely the girl's heart has been his from the period of her school-days. Oh! a little affair—she was persecuted by a boy at a neighbouring school. Her mistress wrote me word—a very determined Romeo young gentleman indeed—quite alarmed about him. In the bud! I carried her off on the spot, and snapped it effectually. Warned he meant to be desparate, I kept her away from my house at Dover four months, place to place; and I did well. I heard on my return, that a youth, answering to the schoolmistress's description of him, had been calling several times, the first two months and longer. You have me alluding to these little nonsensical nothings, because she seemed born to create violent attachments, even at that early day; and Lady Eglett—Lady Charlotte Eglett may hear; for there is no end to them, and

impute them to her, when really!—can she be made responsible for eyes innocent of the mischief they appear destined to do? But I am disturbing you in your work."

"You are very good, ma'am," said the ghost of the determined young gentleman.

"A slight cold, have you?" Mrs. Pagnell asked solicitously.

"Dear me, no!" he gave answer with a cleared throat.

In charging him with more than he wanted to carry, she supplied him with particulars he had wanted to know; and now he asked himself what could be the gain of any amount of satisfied curiosity regarding a married Aminta. She slew my lord on board a packet-boat; she bears the arrows that slay. My lord married her where the first English chaplain was to be found; that is not wonderful either. British Embassy, Madrid! Weyburn believed the ceremony to have been performed there: at the same time, he could hear Lady Charlotte's voice repeating with her varied intonation Mrs. Pagnell's impressive utterances; and he could imagine how the somewhat silly duenna aunt, so penetrable in her transparent artifices, struck emphasis on the

incredulity of people inclined to judge of the reported ceremony by Lord Ormont's behaviour to his captive.

How explain that strange matter? But can there be a gain in trying to sound it? Weyburn shuffled it away. Before the fit of passion seized him, he could turn his eager mind from anything which had not a perceptible point of gain, either for bodily strength or mental acquisition, or for money, too, now that the school was growing palpable as an infant in arms and agape for the breast. Thought of gain, and the bent to pursue it, is the shield of Athene over young men in the press of the seductions. He had to confess his having lost some bits of himself by reason of his meditations latterly; and that loss, if we let it continue a space, will show in cramp at the wrist, logs on the legs, a wheezy wind, for any fellow vowed to physical trials of strength and skill. It will show likewise in the brain beating broken wings—inability to shoot a thought up out of the body for half a minute. And, good Lord! how quickly the tight-strung fellow crumbles, when once the fragmentary disintegration has begun! Weyburn cried out on a heart that bounded off at prodigal gallops, and had to be nipped with reminders of the place of good leader he was for tak-

ing among the young. Hang superexcellence! but we know those moanings over the troubles of a married woman; we know their sources, know their goal, or else we are the fiction-puppet or the Bedlamite; and she is a married woman, married at the British Embassy, Madrid, if you please! after a few weeks' acquaintance with her husband, who doubtless wrote his name intelligibly in the registrar's book, but does not prove himself much the hero when he drives a pen, even for so little as the signing of his name! He signed his name, apparently not more than partly pledging himself to the bond. Lord Ormont's autobiographical scraps combined with Lady Charlotte's hints and Mrs. Pagnell's communications, to provoke the secretary's literary contempt of his behaviour to his wife. However, the former might be mended, and he resumed the task.

It had the restorative effect of touching him to see his old hero in action; whereby he was brought about to a proper modesty, so that he really craved no more than for the mistress of this house to breathe the liberal air of a public acknowledgment of her rightful position. Things constituted by their buoyancy to float are remarkable for lively bobbings when they

are cast upon the waters; and such was the case with Weyburn, until the agitation produced by Mrs. Pagnell left him free to sail away in the society of the steadiest.

He decided that by not observing, not thinking, not feeling, about the circumstances of the household into which Fate had thrown him, he would best be able—probably it was the one way—to keep himself together; and his resolution being honest all round, he succeeded in it as long as he abstained from a very wakeful vigilance over simple eyesight. For if one is nervously on guard to not-see, the matter starts up winged, and enters us, and kindles the mind, and tingles through the blood; it has us as a foe. The art of blind vision requires not only practice, but an intimate knowledge of the arts of the traitor we carry within. Safest for him, after all, was to lay fast hold of the particularly unimportant person he was, both there and anywhere else. The Countess of Ormont's manner toward him was to be read as a standing index of the course he should follow; and he thanked her. He could not quite so sincerely thank her aunt. His ingratitude for the sickly dose she had administered to him sprang a doubt whether Lady Ormont now thanked her aunt on account

of services performed at the British Embassy, Madrid.

Certain looks of those eyes recently, when in colloquy with my lord, removed the towering nobleman to a shadowed landscape.

Was it solely an effect of eyes commanding light, and having every shaft of the quiver of the rays at her disposal? Or was it a shot from a powerful individuality issuing out of bondage to some physical oppressor no longer master of the soul, in peril of the slipping away of the body? Her look on him was not hate: it was larger, more terribly divine. Those eyes had elsewhere once looked love: they had planted their object in a throbbing Eden. The man on whom they had looked shivered over the thought of it after years of blank division.

Rather than have those eyes to look on him their displacing unintentness, the man on whom they had once looked love would have chosen looks of wrath, the darts that kill—blest darts of the celestial Huntress, giving sweet sudden cessation of pain, in the one everlasting last flash of life with thought that the shot was hers. Oh for the *ἀγαν̀ βέλεα* of the Merciful in splendour!

These were the outcries of the man deciding simultaneously not to observe, not to think, not to feel, and husbanding calculations upon the storage of gain for the future. Softness held the song below. It came of the fact that his enforced resolution, for the sake of sanity, drove his whole reflective mind backward upon his younger days, when an Evening and a Morning star in him greeted the bright Goddess Browny or sang adieu, and adored beyond all golden beams the underworld whither she had sunk, where she was hidden.

Meanwhile, the worthy dame who had dosed him was out in her carriage, busy paying visits to distinguished ladies of the great world, with the best of excuses for an early call, which was gossip to impart, such as the Countess of Ormont had not yet thought of mentioning; and two or three of them were rather amusedly interested to hear that Lord Ormont had engaged a handsome young secretary, "under the patronage of Lady Charlotte Eglett, devoted to sports of all kinds, immensely favoured by both." Gossip must often have been likened to the winged insect bearing pollen to the flowers; it fertilises many a vacuous reverie. Those flowers of the upper garden are not, indeed, stationary and in need of the missionary buzzer, but if they have been in one place

unmoved for one hour, they are open to take animation from their visitors. Aminta was pleasantly surprised next day by the receipt of a note from Mrs. Lawrence Finchley, begging to be invited to lunch if she came, as she had a purpose in the wish to meet my lord.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. LAWRENCE FINCHLEY.

My lord had one of his wilful likings for Isabella Lawrence Finchley, and he consented to the torture of an hour of Mrs. Nargett Pagnell in the middle of the day, just to taste the favourite he welcomed at home as he championed her abroad. The reasons were numerous and intimate why she pleased him. He liked the woman, enjoyed the cause for battle that she gave. Weyburn, on coming to the luncheon table, beheld a lady with the head of a comely boy, the manner, softened in delicate feminine, of a capital comrade. Her air of candour was her nature in her face; and it carried a guileless roguery, a placid daring, a supersensual naughtiness, a simplicity of repose amid the smoky reputation she created, that led one to think the vapour calumnious or the creature privileged. That young boy's look opened him at once; he had not to warm to her,—he flew. Ordinarily the sweetest ladies will make us pass through cold mist and cross a stile or two, or a

broken bridge, before the formalities are cleared away to grant us rights of citizenship. She was like those frank lands where we have not to hand out a passport at the frontier and wait for dubious inspection of it.

She prevailed with cognizant men and with the frivolous. Women were capable of appreciating her, too; as Aminta did, despite some hinted qualifications addressed shyly to her husband. But these were the very matters exciting his particular esteem. He was of Lady Charlotte's mind, in her hot zeal against injustice done to the creatures she despised; and yet more than she applauded a woman who took up her idiot husband's challenge to defend her good name, and cleared it, right or wrong, and beat him down on his knees, and then started for her spell of the merry canter over turf: an example to the English of the punishment they get for their stupid Puritanic tyranny—sure to be followed by a national helter-skelter down-hill headlong. And Mrs. Lawrence was not one of the corrupt, he argued: she concealed what it was decent to conceal, without pouting hypocritical pretences; she had merely dispensed with idle legal formalities, in the prettiest curvetting airy wanton way, to divorce the man who tried to divorce her, and "whined to be forgiven when he found he

couldn't. Adderwood was ready to marry her to-morrow, if the donkey husband would but go and bray his last. Half a dozen others were heads off on the same course to that goal."

That was her champion's perusal of a lady candidly asserting her right to have breeched comrades, and paying for it in the advocacy which compromises. She was taken to be and she was used as a weapon wherewith to strike at our Pharisees. Women pushing out into the world for independence, bleed heavy payments all round.

The earl's double-edged defence of her was partly a vindication of another husband, who allowed his wife to call her friend; he was nevertheless assured of her not being corrupt, both by his personal knowledge of the lady, and his perception of her image in the bosom of his wife. She did no harm there, he knew well. Although he was not a man to put his trust in faces, as his young secretary inclined to do, Mrs. Lawrence's look of honest boy did count among the pleadings. And somewhat so might a government cruiser observe the intrusion of a white sailed yacht in protected sea-waters, where licensed trawlers are at the haul.

Talk over the table coursed as fluently as might be, with Mrs. Pagnell for a boulder in the stream.

Uninformed by malice, she led up to Lord Adderwood's name, and perhaps more designedly spoke of Mr. Morsfield, on whom her profound reading into the female heart of the class above her caused her to harp, as "a real Antinous," that the ladies might discuss him and Lord Ormont wax meditative.

Mrs. Lawrence pitied the patient gentleman, while asking him in her mind who was the author of the domestic burden he had to bear.

"It reminds me I have a mission," she said. "There's a fencing match down at a hall in the West, near the barracks; private and select: Soldier and Civilian; I forget who challenged—Civilian, one judges; Soldiers are the peaceful party. They want you to act 'umpire,' as they call it, on the military side, my dear lord; and you will?—I have given my word you will bring Lady Ormont. You will?—and not let me be confounded! Yes, and we shall make a party. I see consent. Aminta will enjoy the switch of steel. I love to see fencing. It rouses all that is diabolical in me."

She sent a skimming look at the secretary sitting opposite.

"And I," said he, much freshened.

"You fence?"

"Handle the foils."

"If you must speak modestly! Are you in practice?"

"I spend an hour in Captain Chiallo's fencing rooms generally every evening before dinner. I heard there the first outlines of the match proposed. You are right; it was the civilian."

"Mr. Morsfield, as I suspected."

She smiled to herself, like one saying, Not badly managed, Mr. Morsfield!

"Italian school?" Lord Ormont inquired, with a screw of the eyelids.

"French, my lord."

"The only school for teaching."

"The simplest—has the most rational method. Italians are apt to be tricky. But they were masters once, and now and then they send out a fencer the French can't touch."

"How would you account for it?"

"If I had to account for it, I should say, hotter blood, cool nerve, quick brain."

"Hum. Where are we, then?"

"We don't shine with the small sword."

"We had men neatly pinked for their slashings in the Peninsula."

"We've had clever Irishmen."

"Hot enough blood! This man Morsfield—have you crossed the foils with him?"

"Goes at it like a Spaniard; though Spaniards in Paris have been found wary enough."

My lord hummed. "Fellow looks as if he would easily lose his head over steel."

"He can be dangerous."

The word struck on something, and rang.

Mrs. Lawrence had a further murmur within her lips. Her travelling eye met Aminta's and passed it.

"But not dangerous, surely, if the breast is padded?" said Mrs. Pagnell.

"Oh no, oh no; not in that case!" Mrs. Lawrence ran out her voluble assent, and her eyelids blinked; her fair boy's face was mischief at school under shadow of the master.

She said to Weyburn: "Are you one in the list —to give our military a lesson? They want it."

His answer was unheard by Aminta. She gathered from Mrs. Lawrence's pleased sparkle that he had been invited to stand in the list; and the strange, the absurd spectacle of a young schoolmaster taking the heroic attitude for attack and defence wrestled behind her eyes with a suddenly vivid first-of-May cricketing-field, a scene of snowballs flying, the vision

of a strenuous lighted figure scaling to noble young manhood. Isabella Lawrence's look at him spirited the bright past out of the wretched long-brown-coat shroud of the present, prompting her to grieve that some woman's hand had not smoothed a small tuft of hair, disorderly on his head a little above the left parting, because Isabella Lawrence Finchley could have no recollection of how it used to toss feathery-wild at his games.

My lord hummed again. "I suspect we're going to get a drubbing. This fellow here has had his French *maître d'armes*. Show me your hand, sir."

Weyburn smiled, and extended his right hand, saying: "The wrist wants exercise."

"Ha! square thumb, flesh full at the nails' ends; you were a bowler at cricket."

"Now examine the palms, my lord; I judge by the lines on the palms," Mrs. Pagnell remarked.

He nodded to her and rose.

Coffee had not been served, she reminded him; it was coming in, so down he sat a yard from the table; outwardly equable, inwardly cursing coffee, though he refused to finish a meal without his cup.

"I think the palms do betray something," said Mrs. Lawrence; and Aminta said: "Everything betrays."

"No, my dear," Mrs. Pagnell corrected her; "the extremities betray, and we cannot read the centre. Is it not so, my lord?"

"It may be as you say, ma'am."

She was disappointed in her scheme to induce a general examination of palms, and especially his sphinx lordship's.

Weyburn controlled the tongue she so frequently tickled to an elvish gavotte, but the humour on his face touched Mrs. Lawrence's to a subdued good-fellow roguishness, and he felt himself invited to chat with her on the walk for a reposeful ten minutes in Aminta's drawing-room.

Mrs. Pagnell, "quite enjoying the company," as she told her niece, was dismayed to hear her niece tell her of a milliner's appointment, positive for three o'clock; and she had written it in her head "p.m., four o'clock," and she had mislaid or destroyed the milliner's note; and she still had designs upon his lordship's palms, things to read and hint around her off the lines. She departed.

Lord Ormont became genial; and there was no one present who did not marvel that he should continue to decree a state of circumstances more or less necessitating the infliction he groaned under. He

was too lofty to be questioned, even by his favourites. Mrs. Lawrence conjured the ghost of Lady Charlotte for an answer: this being Lord Adderwood's idea. Weyburn let his thoughts go on fermenting. Pride froze a beginning stir in the bosom of Aminta.

Her lord could captivate a reluctant woman's bosom when he was genial. He melted her and made her call up her bitterest pride to perform its recent office. That might have failed; but it had support in a second letter received from the man accounted both by Mrs. Lawrence and by Mr. Weyburn "dangerous"; and the thought of who it was that had precipitated her to "play little games" for the sole sake of rousing him through jealousy to a sense of righteous duty, armed her desperately against him. She could exult in having read the second letter right through on receipt of it, and in remembering certain phrases; and notably in a reflection shot across her bewildered brain by one of the dangerous man's queer mad sentences: *Be as iron as you like, I will strike you to heat;* and her thought: *Is there assurance of safety in a perpetual defence?*—all while she smiled on her genial lord, and signified agreement, with a smiting of wonderment at her heart, when he alluded to a panic shout of the country for defence, and said: "Much crying

of that kind weakens the power to defend when the real attack comes." Was it true?

"But say what you propose?" she asked.

Lord Ormont proposed vigilance and drill; a small degree of self-sacrifice on the part of the population, and a look-out head in the War Department. He proposed to have a nation of stout braced men laughing at the foreign bully or bandit, instead of being a pack of whimpering women; whom he likened to the randomly protestant geese of our country roadside, heads out a yard in a gabble of defence while they go backing.

So thereupon Aminta's notion of a resemblance in the mutual thought subsided; she relapsed on the cushioning sentiment that she was a woman. And —only a woman! he might exclaim, if it pleased him; though he would never be able to say she was one of the whimpering. She, too, had the choice to indulge in scorn of the superior man stone blind to proceedings intimately affecting him—if he cared! One might doubt it.

Mrs. Lawrence listened to him with a mind more disengaged, and a flitting disapproval of Aminta's unsympathetic ear, or reluctance to stimulate the devout attention a bruised warrior should have in his tent. She did not press on him the post of

umpire. He consented—at her request, he said—to visit the show; but refused any official position that would, it was clearly enough implied, bring his name in any capacity whatever before the country which had unpardonably maltreated him.

Feminine wits will be set working, when a point has been gained; and as Mrs. Lawrence could now say she had persuaded Lord Ormont to gratify her specially, she warmed to fancy she read him, and that she might have managed the wounded and angry giant. Her minor intelligence, caracoling unhampered by harassing emotions, rebuked Aminta's for not perceiving that to win him round to whatever a woman may desire, she must be with him, outstrip him even, along the line he chooses for himself; abuse the country, rail at the Government, ridicule the title of English Army, proscribe the name of India in his hearing. Little stings of jealousy are small insect bites, and do not pique a wounded giant hardly sensible of irritation under his huge, and as we assume for our purpose, justifiable wrath. We have to speculate which way does the giant incline to go? and turn him according to the indication.

Mrs. Lawrence was driven by her critic mood to think Aminta relied—erroneously, after woman's old

fashion—on the might of superb dark eyes after having been captured. It seemed to her worse than a beautiful woman's vanity, a childishness. But her boy's head held boy's brains; and Lord Ormont's praise of the splendid creature's nerve when she had to smell powder in Spain, and at bull-fights, and once at a wrecking of their carriage down a gully on the road over the Alpujarras, sent her away subdued, envious, happy to have kissed the cheek of the woman who could inspire it.

CHAPTER IX.

A FLASH OF THE BRUISED WARRIOR.

THE winning of Lord Ormont's consent to look on at the little bout of arms was counted an achievement; for even in his own rarefied upper circle, where the fervid sentiments are not allowed to be seen plunging, he had his troop of enthusiasts; and they were anxious that he should make an appearance in public, to take what consolation a misunderstood and injured man could get from evidence of the grateful esteem entertained for him by a party of his countrymen, who might reasonably expect at the same time to set eyes, at rather close quarters, on the wonderful dark beauty, supposed a Spaniard, occasionally beheld riding beside him. If it is possible to connect a woman with the devoutest of their anticipations, the sons of leisure up there will do it. But, in truth, an English world was having cause to ransack the dust-heaps for neglected men of mettle. Our intermittent ague, known as dread of invasion, was over the land. Twice down the

columns of panic newspaper correspondence Lord Ormont saw his name cited, with the effect on him that such signs of national repentance approaching lodged a crabbed sourness in his consulting-room, whether of head or breast.

He was assailed by a gusty appeal from Lady Charlotte, bidding him seize the moment to proclaim his views; while the secretary had a private missive from her, wherein, between insistency and supplication, she directed him to bring the subject before my lord every day, and be sure to write out a fair copy of the epistle previous to the transmission of it. "Capua" was mentioned; she brought in "a siren," too. Her brother was to be soldier again—fling off silken bonds. The world might prate of his morality; now was the hour for showing his patriotism, casting aside his just anger, and backing his chief's opinion. "A good chance to get their names together." To her brother she declared that the columns of the leading journal were open to him—"in large type"; he was to take her word for it; he had only to "dictate away," quite at his ease, just as he talked at Olmer, and leave the bother of the scribe's business to his *aide*. "Lose no time," she concluded; "the country wants your ideas; let us have *your plan*."

The earl raised his shoulders, and kept his *aide* exclusively at the Memoirs. Weyburn, however, read out to him, with accentuation, foolish stuff in the recurrent correspondence of the daily sheets, and a complacent burgess article, meant to be a summary of the controversy and a recommendation to the country to bask in the sun of its wealth again.

"Ay, be the porker sow it's getting liker and liker to every year!" Lord Ormont exclaimed, and sprang on his feet. "Take a pen. Shut up that box. We'll give 'em digestive biscuits for their weak stomachs. Invasion can't be done, they say! I tell the doddered asses Napoleon would have been over if Villeneuve had obeyed him to the letter. Villeneuve had a fit of paralysis, owing to the prestige of Nelson—that's as it happened. And they swear at prestige, won't believe in it, because it's not fat bacon. I tell them, after Napoleon's first battles, prestige did half his work for him. It saved him at Essling from a plunge into the Danube; it saved him at Moskowa; it would have marched him half over England at his first jump on our shingle beach. But that squelch of fat citizens should be told—to the devil with them! will they ever learn? short of a second William!—there were eight-and-forty hours when the liberty of this country hung wavering in

the balance with those Boulogne boats. Now look at Ulm and Austerlitz, Essling, Wagram; put the victors in those little affairs to front our awkward squads. The French could boast a regimental system, and chiefs who held them as the whist-player his hand of cards. Had we a better general than the Archduke Charles? or cavalry and artillery equal to the Hungarian? or drilled infantry numbering within eighty thousand of the Boulogne-Wimereux camps? We had nothing but the raw material of courage—pluck, and no science. Ask any boxing man what he thinks of the chances. The French might have sacrificed a fleet to land fifty thousand. Our fleet was our one chance. Any foreign General at the head of fifty thousand trained, picked troops would risk it, and cut an *entrechat* for joy of the chance. We should have fought and bled and been marched over—a field of Anglo-Saxon stubble! and Nelson riding the Channel, undisputed lord of the waters. Heigh! by the Lord, this country would have been like a man free to rub his skin with his hand and a mortal disease in his blood. Are you ready? How anticipate a hostile march on the capital, is our business."

Striding up and down the library, Lord Ormont dropped his wrath to dictate the practical measures

for defence—detesting the cat's-cry "defence," he said; but the foe would bring his old growlers, and we should have to season our handful of regulars and mob of levies, turn the mass into troops. With plenty of food, and blows daily, Englishmen soon get stomachs for the right way to play the game; bowl as well as bat; and the sooner they give up the idea of shamming sturdy on a stiff hind leg, the better for their chances. Only, it's a beastly thing to see that for their favourite attitude,—like some dog of a fellow weak in the fists, weaker in the midriff, at a fair, who cries, Come on, and prays his gods you won't. All for peace, the rascal boasts himself, and he beats his wife and kicks his curs at home. Is there any one to help him now, he vomits gold and honours on the man he yesterday treated as a felon. Ha!

Bull the bumpkin disposed of, my lord drew leisurely back from the foeman's landing-place, at the head of a body of serious Englishmen; teaching them to be manageable as chess-pieces, ready as bow-strings to let fly. Weyburn rejoiced to find himself transcribing crisp sentences, hard on the matter, without garnish of scorn. Kent, Sussex, Surrey, all the southern heights about London, round away to the south-western of the Hampshire heathland, were

accurately mapped in the old warrior's brain. He knew his points of vantage by name; there were no references to gazetteeer or atlas. A chain of forts and earthworks enables us to choose our ground, not for clinging to them, but for choice of time and place to give battle. If we have not been playing double-dyed traitor to ourselves, we have a preponderating field artillery; our yeomanry and volunteer horsemen are becoming a serviceable cavalry arm; our infantry prove that their heterogeneous composition can be welded to a handy mass, and can stand fire and return it, and not be beaten by an acknowledged defeat.

"That's English! yes, that's English! when they're at it," my lord sang out.

"To know how to take a licking, that wins in the end," cried Weyburn; his former enthusiasm for the hero mounting, enlightened by a reminiscence of the precept he had hammered on the boys at Cuper's.

"They fall well. Yes, the English fall like men," said my lord, pardoning and embracing the cuffed nation. "Bodies knocked over, hearts upright. That's example; we breed Ironsides out of a sight like that. If it weren't for a cursed feeble Government scraping *congés* to the taxpayer—well, so many of our

good fellows would not have to fall. That I say; for this thing is going to happen some day, mind you, sir! And I don't want to have puncheons and hogsheads of our English blood poured out merely to water the soil of a conquered country because English Governments are a craven lot, not daring risk of office by offending the taxpayer. But, on!"

Weyburn sent Lady Charlotte glowing words of the composition in progress.

They worked through a day, and a second day—talked of nothing else in the intervals. Explanatory answers were vouchsafed to Aminta's modest inquiries at lunch, as she pictured scenes of smoke, dust and blood from the overpowering plain masculine lines they drew, terrible in bluntness. The third morning Lord Ormont had map and book to verify distances and attempt a scale of heights, take names of estates, farms, parishes, commons, patches of woodland. Weyburn wrote his fair copy on folio paper, seven-and-thirty pages. He read it aloud to the author on the afternoon of the fourth day, with the satisfaction in his voice that he felt. My lord listened and nodded. The plan for the defence of England's heart was a good plan.

He signed to have the manuscript handed to him. A fortified London secure of the Thames for abun-

lant supplies, well able to breathe within earthworks extending along the southern hills, was clearly shown to stand the loss of two big battles on the Sussex weald or more East to North-east, if fortune willed it.

He rose from his chair, paced some steps, with bent head, came back thoughtfully, lifted the manuscript sheets for another examination. Then he stooped to the fire, spreading the edges unevenly, so that they caught flame. Weyburn spied at him. It was to all appearance the doing of a man who had intended it and brought it to the predetermined conclusion.

"About time for you to be off for your turn at Chiallo's," our country's defender remarked, after tossing the last half-burnt lump under the grate and shovelling at it.

"I will go, my lord," said Weyburn; and he was glad to go.

He went, calculated his term of service under Lord Ormont. He was young, not a philosopher. Waste of anything was abhorrent to a nature pointed t store of daily gain, if it were only the gain in a ew or a freshened idea; and time lost, work lost, od counsel to the nation lost, represented horrid cuity to him, and called up the counter demon-

stration of a dance down the halls of madness, for proof that we should, at least, have jolly motion of limbs there before Perdition struck the great gong. Ay, and we should be twirling with a fair form on the arm: woman and man; as it ought to be; twirling downward, true, but together. Such a companionship has a wisdom to raise it above the title of madness. Name it, heartily, pleasure; and in contempt of the moralist burgess, praise the dance of a woman and the man together high over a curmudgeonly humping solitariness, that won't forgive an injury, nurses rancour, smacks itself in the face, because it can't—to use the old schoolboy words—take a licking!

These were the huddled, drunken sensations and thoughts entertained by Weyburn, without his reflecting on the detachment from his old hero, of which they were the sign. He criticised impulsively, and fancied he did no more, and was not doing much; though, in fact, criticism is the end of worship; the Brutus blow at that Imperial but mortal bosom.

The person criticised was manifest. Who was the woman he twirled with? She was unfeatured, undistinguished, one of the sex, or all the sex: the sex to be shunned as our deadly sapper of gain, unless we find the chosen one to super-terrestrialise

it and us, and trebly and trebly outdo our gift of our whole sèlf for her.

She was indistinguishable, absolutely unknown; yet she murmured, or seemed to murmur—for there was no sound—a complaint of Lord Ormont. And she, or some soundless mouth of woman, said he was a splendid military hero, a chivalrous man, a man of inflexible honour; but had no understanding of how to treat a woman, or belief in her having equal life with him on earth.

She was put aside rather petulantly, and she took her seat out of the whirl with submission. Thinking she certainly was not Browny, whom he would have known among a million, he tried to quit the hall, and he twirled afresh, necessarily not alone; it is the unpardonable offence both to the Graces and the Great Mother for man to waltz alone. She twirled on his arm, uninvited; accepted, as in the course of nature; hugged, under dictate of the nature of the man steeled against her by the counting of gain, and going now at desperation's pace, by very reason of those defensive locked steam-valves meant to preserve him from this madness,—for the words of the red-lipped mate, where there were no words, went through him like a music when the bow is over

the viol, sweeping imagination, and they said her life was wasting.

Was not she a priceless manuscript cast to the flames? Her lord had been at some trouble to win her. Or his great fame and his shadowed fortunes had won her. He took her for his own, and he would not call her his own. He comported himself with absolute, with kindly deference to the lady whose more than vital spark he let the gossips puff at and blur. He praised her courage, visibly admired her person, admitted her in private to be his equal, degraded her in public. Could anything account for the behaviour of so manly and noble a gentleman? —Rhetoric made the attempt, and Weyburn gave up the windy business.

Discovering that his fair partner of the wasting life was—he struggled to quench the revelation—Aminta, he stopped the dance. If there was no gain in whirling fancifully with one of the sex, a spin of a minute with her was downright bankruptcy.

He was young, full of blood; his heart led him away from the door Lord Ormont had exposed; at which a little patient unemotional watchfulness might have intimated to him something besides the simple source of the old hero's complex chapter of conduct. As it was, Weyburn did see the rancour of a raw

wound in operation. But he moralised and disapproved; telling himself, truly enough, that so it would not have been with him; instead of sounding at my lord's character, and the condition of the unjustly neglected great soldier, for the purpose of asking how that raw wound would affect an injured veteran, who compressed, almost repressed, the roar of Achilles, though his military bright name was to him his Briseis.

CHAPTER X.

A SHORT PASSAGE IN THE GAME PLAYED BY TWO.

POLITEST of men in the domestic circle and everywhere among women, Lord Ormont was annoyed to find himself often gruffish behind the tie of his cravat. Indeed, the temper of our eminently serene will feel the strain of a doldrum-dulness that is goaded to activity by a nettle. The forbearance he carried farther than most could do was tempted to kick, under pressure of Mrs. Nargett Pagnell. Without much blaming Aminta, on whose behalf he submitted to it, and whose resolution to fix in England had brought it to this crisis, he magnanimously proposed to the Fair Enemy he forced her to be, and liked to picture her as being, a month in Paris.

Aminta declined it for herself; after six or more years of travelling, she wished to settle, and know her country she said: a repetition remark, wide of the point, and indicatory to the game of Pull she was again playing beneath her smooth visage, un-

aware that she had the wariest of partners at the game.

"But go you—do, I beg," she entreated. "It will give you new impressions; and I cannot bear to tie you down here."

"How you can consent to be tied down here, is the wonder to me!" said he. "When we travelled through the year, just visited England and were off again, we were driving on our own road. Vienna in April and May—what do you say? You like the reviews there, and the dances, concerts, Zigeuner bands, military Bohemian bands. Or Egypt to-morrow, if you like—though you can't be permitted to swim in the Nile, as you wanted. Come, Xarifa, speak it. I go to exile without you. Say you come."

She smiled firmly. The name of her honeymoon days was not a cajolery to her.

His name had been that of the Christian Romancero Knight Durandarte, and she gave it to him, to be on the proper level with him, while she still declined.

"Well, but just a month in Paris! There's nothing doing here. And we both like the French theatre."

"London will soon be filling."

"Well, but——" He stopped; for the filling of

London did really concern her, in the game of Pull she was covertly playing with him. "You seem to have caught the fever of this London; . . . no bands, . . . no reviews . . . Low comedy acting." He muttered his objections to London.

"The society of people speaking one's own tongue, add that," she ventured to say.

"You know you are ten times more Spanish than English. Moorish, if you like."

"The slave of the gallant Christian Knight, converted, baptised, and blissful. Oh, I know. But now we are settled in England I have a wish to study English society."

"Disappointing, I assure you;—dinners heavy, dancing boorish, intrigue a blind-man's-buff. We've been over it all before!"

"We have."

"Admired, I dare say. You won't be understood."

"I like my countrymen."

"The women have good looks—of the ungarnished kind. The men are louts."

"They are brave."

"You're to see their fencing. You'll own a little goes a long way."

"I think it will amuse me."

"So I thought when I gave the nod to Isabella your friend."

"You like her?"

"You, too."

"One fancies she would make an encouraging second in a duel."

"I will remember . . . when I call you out."

"Oh, my dear lord, you have dozens to choose from; leave me my one if we are to enter the lists."

"We are, it seems; unless you consent to take the run to Paris. You are to say Tom or Rowsley."

"The former, I can never feel at home in saying; Rowsley is Lady Charlotte's name for you."

The name of Lady Charlotte was an invitation to the conflict between them. He passed it, and said: "Durandarte runs a mile on the mouth, and the Coriolanus of their newspapers helps a stage-player to make lantern jaws. Neither of them comes well from the lips of my girl. After seven years she should have hit on a nickname, if none of the Christian suit. I am not 'at home' either with 'my lord.' However, you send me off to Paris alone; and you'll be alone and dull here in this London. Incomprehensible to me why!"

"We are both wondering?" said Aminta.

"You're handsomer than when I met you first—by heaven you are!"

She flushed her dark brown-red late-sunset. "Brunes are exceptional in England."

"Thousands admiring you, of course! I know, my love, I have a jewel."

She asked him: "What are jewels for?" and he replied, "To excite cupidity."

"When they're shut in a box?"

"'Ware burglars! But this one is not shut up. She shuts herself up. And up go her shoulders! Decide to be out of it, and come to Paris for some life for a month. No? It's positive? When do you expect your little school friend?"

"After Easter. Aunt will be away."

"Your little friend likes the country. I'll go to my house agents. If there's a country house open on the upper Thames, you can have swimming, boating, botanising . . . "

He saw her throat swallow. But as he was offering agreeable things he chose to not understand how he was to be compassionate.

"Steignton?" she said, and did her cause no good by saying it feebly.

His look of a by-gone awake-in-sleep old look, drearily known to her, was like a strip of sunlight

on a fortress wall. It signified, Is the poor soul pushing me back to that again?

She compelled herself to say: "Your tenant there?"

"Matter of business . . . me and my tenant," he remarked. "The man pays punctually."

"The lease has expired."

"Not quite. You are misinformed."

"At Easter."

"Ah! Question of renewing."

"You were fond of the place."

"I was fond of the place? Thank Blazes, I'm not what I was!" He paced about. "There's not a corner of the place that doesn't screw an eye at me, because I had a dream there. *La gloire!*"

The rest he muttered. "These English!" was heard.

Aminta said: "Am I never to see Steignton?"

Lord Ormont invoked the Powers. He could not really give answer to this female talk of the eternities.

"Beaten I can never be," he said, with instinctive indulgence to the greater creature. "But down there at Steignton, I should be haunted by a young donkey swearing himself the fellow I grew up out of. No doubt of that. I don't like him the better for

it. Steignton grimaces at a cavalry officer fool enough at his own risks and penalties to help save India for the English. Maunderers! You can't tell —they don't know themselves—what they mean. Except that they're ready to take anything you hand 'em, and then pipe to your swinging. I served them well—and at my age, in full activity, they condemn me to sit and gape!"

He stopped his pacing and gazed on the glass of the window.

"Would you wish me not to be present at this fencing?" said Aminta.

"Dear me! by all means, go, my love," he replied.

Any step his Fair Enemy won in the secret game of Pull between them, she was undisputedly to keep.

She suggested: "It might lead to unpleasantness."

"Of what sort?"

"You ask?"

He emphasised: "Have you forgotten? Something happened after that last ball at Challis's Rooms. Their women as well as their men must be careful not to cross me."

Aminta had confused notions of her being planted in hostile territory, and torn and knitted, trumpeted

to the world as mended, but not honourably mended in a way to stop corridor scandal. The ball at Challis's Rooms had been one of her steps won: it had necessitated a requirement for the lion in her lord to exhibit himself, and she had gained nothing with Society by the step, owing to her poor performance of the lion's mate. She had, in other words, shunned the countenance of some scattered people pityingly ready to support her against the deadly passive party known to be Lady Charlotte's.

She let her lord go; thinking that once more had she striven and gained nothing: which was true of all their direct engagements. And she had failed because of her being only a woman! Mr. Morsfield was foolishly wrong in declaring that she, as a woman, had reserves of strength. He was perhaps of Lady Charlotte's mind with regard to the existence of a Countess of Ormont, or he would know her to be incredibly cowardly. Cowardly under the boast of pride, too; well, then, say, if you like, a woman!

Yet this mere shallow woman would not hesitate to meet the terrible Lady Charlotte at any instant, on any terms: and what are we to think of a soldier, hero, lion, dreading to tell her to her face that the persecuted woman is his wife!

"Am I a woman they can be ashamed of?" she

asked, and did not seek the answer at her mirror. She was in her bedroom, and she put out a hand to her jewel-box, fingered it, found it locked, and abandoned her idle project. A gentleman was "dangerous." She had not found him so. He had the reputation, perhaps, because he was earnest. Not so very many men are earnest. She called to recollection how ludicrously practical he was in the thick of his passion. His third letter (addressed to the Countess of Ormont—whom he manifestly did not or would not take to be the veritable Countess —and there was much to plead for his error), or was it his fourth?—the letters were a tropical hail-storm:—third or fourth, he broke off a streaked thunderpeal, to capitulate his worldly possessions, give the names and degrees of kinship of his relatives, the exact amount of the rent-roll of his Yorkshire estates, of his funded property.

Silly man! but not contemptible. He proposed everything in honour, from his view of it.

Whether in his third, fourth, or fifth letter. . . . How many had come? She drew the key from her purse, and opened a drawer. The key of the jewel-box was applied to the lock.

Mr. Morsfield had sent her six flaming letters.

He not only took no precautions, he boasted that he hailed the consequences of discovery. Six!

She lifted a pen: it had to be done.

He was briefly informed that he disturbed her peace. She begged he would abstain from any further writing to her.

The severity was in the brevity. The contrast of her style and his appeared harsh. But it belonged to the position.

Having with one dash of the pen scribbled her three lines, she slipped the letter into her pocket. That was done, and it had to be done; it ought to have been done before. How simple it was when one contemplated it as actually done! Aminta made the motion of a hand along the paper, just a flourish. Soon after, her head dropped back on the chair, and her eyes shut; she took in breath through parted lips. The brief lines of writing had cut away a lump of her vitality.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRETARY TAKEN AS AN ANTIDOTE.

DUSTY wayfarers along a white high-road who know of a bubbling little spring across a stile, on the woodland borders of deep grass, are hailed to sit aside it awhile; and Aminta's feverishness was cooled by now and then a quiet conversation with the secretary ambitious to become a school-master. Lady Charlotte liked him, so did her lord; Mrs. Lawrence had chatted with him freshly, as it was refreshing to recollect; nobody thought him a stunted growth.

In Aminta's realised recollections, amid the existing troubles of her mind, the charge against him grew paler, and she could no longer quite think that the young hero transformed into a Mr. Cuper had deceived her, though he had done it—much as if she had assisted at the planting and watched aforetime the promise of a noble tree, to find it, after an interval of years, pollarded—a short trunk shooting out a shock of small, slim, stiff branches; dwarfed and disgraced; serviceable perhaps; not ludicrous or

ugly, certainly, taking it for a pollard. And he was a cool well-spring to talk with. He, supposed once to be a passionate nature, scorned passion as a madness; he smiled in his merciful executioner's way at the high society, of which her aim was to pass for one among the butterflies or dragonflies; he had lost his patriotism; he labelled our English classes *the skimmers, the gorgers, the grubbers,* and stigmatised them with a friendly air; and uttered words of tolerance only for farmers and surgeons and schoolmasters. But that was quite incidental in the humorous run of his talk, diverting to hear while it lasted. He had, of course, a right to his ideas.

No longer concerned in contesting them, she drank at the water of this plain earth-well, and hoped she preferred it to fiery draughts, though it was flattish, or, say, flavourless. In the other there was excess of flavour—or, no, spice it had to be called. The young schoolmaster's world seemed a sunless place, the world of traders bargaining for gain, without a glimmer of the rich generosity to venture life, give it, dare all for native land—or for the one beloved. Love pressed its claim on heroical generosity, and instantly it suffused her, as an earth under flush of sky. The one beloved! She had not known love; she was in her five-and-twentieth year, and love was

not only unknown to her, it was shut away from her by the lock of a key that opened on no estimable worldly advantage in exchange, but opened on a dreary, clouded round, such as she had used to fancy it must be to the beautiful creamy circus-horse of the tossing mane and flowing tail and superb step. She was admired; she was just as much doomed to a round of paces, denied the glorious fling afield, her nature's food. Hitherto she would have been shamefaced as a boy in forming the word "love": now, believing it denied to her for good and all—for ever and ever—her bosom held and uttered the word. She saw the word, the nothing but the word that it was, and she envisaged it, for the purpose of saying adieu to it—good-bye even to the poor empty word.

This condition was attributable to a gentleman's wild raging with the word, into which he had not infused the mystic spirit. He poured hot wine and spiced. If not the spirit of love, it was really the passion of the man. Her tremors now and again in the reading of his later letters humiliated her, in the knowledge that they came of no response to him, but from the temporary base acquiescence; which is, with women, a terrible perception of the gulf of their unsatisfied nature.

The secretary, cheerful at his work, was found for just the opening of a door. Sometimes she hesitated—to disturb him, she said to herself,—and went up-stairs or out visiting. He protested that he could work on and talk too. She was able to amuse her lord with some of his ideas. He had a stock of them, all his own.

Ideas, new-born and naked original ideas, are acceptable at no time to the humanity they visit to help uplift it from the state of beast. In the England of that period original or unknown ideas were a smoking brimstone to the nose, dread Arabian afrites, invisible in the air, jumping out of vases, armed for the slaughter of the venerable and the cherished, the ivy-clad and celestially haloed. They carried the dishevelled Mænad's torch. A step with them, and we were on the Phlegethon waters of the French Revolution. For a publication of simple ideas men were seized, tried at law, mulcted, imprisoned, and not pardoned after the term of punishment; their names were branded; the horned elect butted at them; he who breathed them offered them up, wittingly or not, to be damned in the nose of the public for an execrable brimstone stench.

Lord Ormont broke through his shouts or grunts at Aminta's report of the secretary's *ideas* on various

topics, particularly the proposal that the lords of the land should head the land in a revolutionary effort to make law of his crazy, top-heavy notions, with a self-satisfied ejaculation: "He has not favoured *me* with any of these puff-balls of his."

The deduction was, that the author sagaciously considered them adapted for the ear of a woman; they were womanish—*i.e.* flighty, gossamer. To the host of males, all ideas are female until they are made facts.

This idea, proposing it to our aristocracy to take up his other ideas, or reject them on pain of the forfeiture of their caste and headship with the generations to follow, and a total displacing of them in history by certain notorious, frowsy, scrubby pamphleteers and publishers, Lord Ormont thought amazingly comical. English nobles heading the weavers, cobblers, and barbers of England! He laughed, but he said, "Charlotte would listen to that."

The dread, high-sitting Lady Charlotte was, in his lofty thinking, a woman, and would therefore listen to nonsense, if it happened to strike a particular set of bells hanging in her cranium. She patronised blasphemous and traitorous law-breakers, just to keep up the pluck of the people, not with a

notion of maintaining our English aristocracy eminent in history.

Lady Charlotte, however, would be the foremost to swoop down on the secretary's ideas about the education of women.

On that subject, Aminta said she did not know what to think.

Now, if a man states the matter he thinks, and a woman does but listen, whether inclining to agree or not, a perceptible stamp is left on soft wax. Lord Ormont told her so, with cavalier kindness.

She confessed "she did not know what to think," when the secretary proposed the education and collocation of boys and girls in one group, never separated, declaring it the only way for them to learn to know and to respect one another. They were to learn together, play together, have matches together, as a scheme for stopping the mischief between them.

"But, my dear girl, don't you see, the devilry was intended by Nature. Life would be the coldest of dishes without it." And as for mixing the breeched and petticoated in those young days—"I can't enter into it," my lord considerately said. "All I can tell you is, I know boys."

Aminta persisted in looking thoughtful.

"Things are bad, as they are now," she said.

"Always were—always will be. They were intended to be, if we are to call them bad. Botched mendings will only make them worse."

"Which side suffers?"

"Both; and both like it. One side must be beaten at any game. It's off and on, pretty equal—except in the sets where one side wears thick boots. Is this fellow for starting a mixed sexes school? Funny mothers!"

"I suppose——" Aminta said, and checked the supposition. "The mothers would not leave their girls unless they were confident . . .?"

"There's to be a female head of the female department? He reckons on finding a woman as big a fool as himself? A fair bit of reckoning enough. He's clever at the pen. He doesn't bother me with his ideas; now and then I've caught a sound of his bee buzzing."

The secretary was left undisturbed at his labours for several days.

He would have been gladdened by a brighter look of her eyes at her next coming. They were introspective and beamless. She had an odd leaning to the talk upon Cuper's boys. He was puzzled by

what he might have classed, in any other woman, as a want of delicacy, when she recurred to incidents which were red patches of the school time, and had clearly lost their glow for her.

A letter once written by him, in his early days at Cuper's, addressed to J. Masner, containing a provocation to fight with any weapons, and signed, "Your Antagonist," had been read out to the whole school, under strong denunciation of the immorality, the unchristian-like conduct of the writer, by Mr. Cuper; creating a sensation that had travelled to Miss Vincent's establishment, where some of the naughtiest of the girls had taken part with the audacious challenger, dreadful though the contemplation of a possible duel so close to them was. And then the girls heard that the anonymous "Your Antagonist," on being cited to proclaim himself in public assembly of school-mates and masters, had jumped on his legs and into the name of—one who was previously thought by Miss Vincent's good girls incapable of the "appalling wickedness," as Mr. Cuper called it, of signing "Your Antagonist" to a Christian school-fellow, having the design to provoke a breach of the law of the land and shed Christian blood. Mr. Cuper delivered an impressive sermon from his desk to the standing-up boarders and day

scholars alike, vilifying the infidel Greek word "antagonist."

"Do you remember the offender's name?" the Countess of Ormont said; and Weyburn said—

"Oh yes, I've not forgotten the incident."

Her eyes, wherein the dead time hung just above the underlids, lingered, as with the wish for him to name the name.

She said: "I am curious to hear how you would treat a case of that sort. Would you preach to the boys?"

"Ten words at most. The right assumption is, that both fellows were to blame. I fancy the proper way would be to appeal to the naughty girls for their opinion as to how the dispute should be decided."

"You impose too much on them. And you are not speaking seriously."

"Pardon me, I am. I should throw myself into the mind of a naughty girl—supposing none of them at hand—and I should let it be known that my eyes were shut to proceedings, always provided the weapons were not such as would cause a shock of alarm in female bosoms."

"You would at your school allow it to be fought out?"

"Judging by the characters of the boys. If they had heads to understand, I would try them at their heads. Otherwise they are the better, they come round quicker to good blood, at their age—I speak of English boys—for a little hostile exercise of their fists. Well, for one thing, it teaches them the value of sparring."

"I must imagine I am not one of the naughty sisterhood; for I cannot think I should ever give consent to fighting of any description, unless for the very best of reasons," said the countess.

His eyes were at the trick of the quarter-minute's poising. Her lids fluttered. "Oh, I don't mean to say I was one of the good," she added.

At the same time her enlivened memory made her conscious of a warning, that she might, as any woman might, so talk on of past days as to take rather more than was required of the antidote she had come for.

The antidote was excellent; cooling, fortifying; "quite a chalybeate," her aunt would say, and she was thankful. Her heart rose on a quiet wave of the thanks, and pitched down to a depth of uncounted fathoms. Aminta was unable to tell herself why.

Mrs. Lawrence Finchley had been announced. On her way to the drawing-room Aminta's brain fell upon a series of dots, that wound along a track to the point where she accused herself of a repented coquetry—cause of the burning letters she was doomed to receive and could not stop without rousing her lion. She dotted backwards; there was no sign that she had been guilty of any weakness other than the almost—at least, in design—innocent first move, which had failed to touch Lord Ormont in the smallest degree. Never failure more absolute!

She was about to inquire of her bosom's oracle whether she greatly cared now. For an answer, her brain went dotting along from Mr. Cuper's school, and a boy named Abner there, and a boy named Matey Weyburn, who protected the little Jew-boy, up to Mr. Abner in London, who recommended him in due season to various acquaintances; among them to Lady Charlotte Eglett. Hence the introduction to Lord Ormont. How little extraordinary circumstances are, if only we trace them to the source!

But if only it had appeared marvellous, the throbbing woman might have seized on it, as a thing fateful, an intervention distinctly designed to waken the best in her, which was, after all, the

strongest. Yea, she could hope and pray and believe it was the strongest.

She was listening to Isabella Lawrence Finchley, wishing she might have followed to some end the above line of her meditations.

Mrs. Lawrence was changed, much warmer, pressing to be more than merely friendly. Aminta twice gave her cheek for kisses. The secretary had spoken of Mrs. Lawrence as having the look of a handsome boy; and Aminta's view of her now underwent a change likewise. Compunction, together with a sisterly taste for the boyish fair one flying her sail independently, and gallantly braving the winds, induced her to kiss in return.

"You do like me a morsel?" said Mrs. Lawrence. "I fell in love with you the last time I was here. I came to see Mr. Secretary—it's avowed; and I have been thinking of you ever since, of no one else. Oh yes, for a man; but you caught me. I've been hearing of him from Captain May. They fence at those rooms. And it's funny, Mr. Morsfield practises there, you know; and there was a time when the lovely innocent Amy, Queen of Blondes, held the seat of the Queen of Brunes. Ah, my dear, the infidelity of men doesn't count. They are affected by the changing moons. As long as the captain is civil

to him, we may be sure beautiful Amy has not complained. Her husband is the pistol she carries in her pocket, and she has fired him twice, with effect. Through love of you I have learnt the different opinion the world of the good has of her and of me; I thought we ran under a common brand. There are gradations. I went to throw myself at the feet of my great-aunt, good old great-aunt Lady de Culme, who is a power in the land. I let her suppose I came for myself, and she reproached me with Lord Adder. I confessed to him and ten others. She is a dear, she's ticklish, and at eighty-four she laughed! She looked into my eyes and saw a field with never a man in it—just a shadow of a man. She admitted the ten cancelled the one, and exactly named to me, by comparison with the erring Amy, the sinner I am and must be, if I'm to live. So, dear, the end of it is," and Mrs. Lawrence put her fingers to a silken amber bow at Aminta's throat, and squared it and flattened it with dainty precision, speaking on under dropped eyelids, intent upon her work, "Lady de Culme will be happy to welcome you whenever it shall suit the Countess of Ormont to accompany her disreputable friend. But what can I do, dear?" She raised her lids and looked beseechingly. "I was born with this taste for the ways and games and

style of men. I hope I don't get on badly with women; but if I'm not allowed to indulge my natural taste, I kick the stable-boards and bite the manger."

Aminta threw her arms round her, and they laughed their mutual peal.

Caressing her still, Aminta said: "I don't know whether I embrace a boy."

"That idea comes from a man!" said Mrs. Lawrence.

It was admitted. The secretary was discussed.

Mrs. Lawrence remarked: "Yes, I like talking with him; he's bright. You drove him out of me the day I saw him. Doesn't he give you the idea of a man who insists on capturing you and lets it be seen he doesn't care two snaps of a finger?"

Aminta petitioned on his behalf indifferently: "He's well bred."

She was inattentive to Mrs. Lawrence's answer. The allusion of the Queen of Blondes had stung her in the unacknowledged regions where women discard themselves and are most sensitive.

"Decide on coming soon to Lady de Culme," said Mrs. Lawrence. "Now that her arms are open

to you, she would like to have you in them. She is old——. You won't be rigorous? no standing on small punctilios? She would call, but she does not —h'm, it is M. le Comte that she does not choose to—h'm. But her arms are open to the countess. It ought to be a grand step. You may be assured that Lady Charlotte Eglett would not be taken into them. My great-aunt has a great-aunt's memory. The Ormonts are the only explanation—if it's an apology—she can offer for the behaviour of the husband of the Countess of Ormont. You know I like him. I can't help liking a man who likes me. Is that the way with a boy, Mr. Secretary? I must have another talk with the gentleman, my dear. You are Aminta to me."

"Always Aminta to you," was the reply, tenderly given.

"But as for comprehending him, I'm as far off that as Lady de Culme, who hasn't the liking for him I have."

"The earl?" said Aminta, showing by her look that she was in the same position.

Mrs. Lawrence shrugged: "I believe men and women marry in order that they should never be able to understand one another. The riddle's best

read at a moderate distance. It's what they call the golden mean; too close, too far, we're strangers. I begin to understand that husband of mine, now we're on bowing terms. Now, I must meet the earl to-morrow. You will arrange? His hand wants forcing. Upon my word, I don't believe it's more."

Mrs. Lawrence contrasted him in her mind with the husband she knew, and was invigorated by the thought that a placable impenetrable giant may often be more pliable in a woman's hands than an irascible dwarf—until, perchance, the latter has been soundly cuffed, and then he is docile to trot like a squire, as near your heels as he can get. She rejoiced to be working for the woman she had fallen in love with.

Aminta promised herself to show the friend a livelier affection at their next meeting.

A seventh letter, signed "Adolphus," came by post, was read and locked up in her jewel-box. They were all nigh destruction for a wavering minute or so. They were placed where they lay because the first of them had been laid there, the box being a strong one, under a patent key, and discovery would mean the terrible. They had not been destroyed because they had, or seemed to her to have, the language of passion. She could read them un-

moved, and appease a wicked craving she owned to having, and reproached herself with having, for that language.

Was she not colour in the sight of men? Here was one, a mouthpiece of numbers, who vowed that homage was her due, and devotion, the pouring forth of the soul to her. What was the reproach if she read the stuff unmoved?

But peruse and reperuse it, and ask impressions to tell our deepest instinct of truthfulness whether language of this character can have been written to two women by one hand! Men are cunning. Can they catch a tone? Not that tone!

"She, too, Mrs. Amy May, was colour in the sight of men. Yet it seemed that he could not have written so to the Queen of Blondes. And she, by repute, was as dangerous to slight as he to attract. Her indifference exonerated him. Besides, a Queen of Blondes would not draw the hearts out of men in England, as in Italy and in Spain. Aminta had got thus far when she found "Queen of Brunes" expunged by a mist: she imagined hearing the secretary's laugh. She thought he was right to laugh at her. She retorted simply: "These are feelings that are poetry."

A man may know nothing about them, and be an excellent schoolmaster.

Suggestions touching the prudence of taking Mrs. Lawrence into her confidence, as regarded these troublesome letters of the man with the dart in his breast, were shuffled aside for various reasons: her modesty shrank; and a sense of honour toward the man forbade it. She would have found it easier to do if she had conspired against her heart in doing it. And yet, cold-bloodedly to expose him and pluck the clothing from a passion—dear to think of only when it is profoundly secret—struck her as an extreme baseness, of which not even the woman who perused and reperused his letters could be guilty.

Her head rang with some of the lines, and she accused her head of the crime of childishness, seeing that her heart was not an accomplice. At the same time, her heart cried out violently against the business of a visit to Lady de Culme, and all the steps it involved. Justly she accused her heart of treason. Heart and head were severed. This; as she partly apprehended, is the state of the woman who is already on the slope of her nature's mine-shaft, dreading the rush downwards, powerless to break away from the light.

Letters perused and reperused, coming from a man never fervently noticed in person, conjure features one would wish to put beside the actual, to make sure that the fiery lines he writes are not practising a beguilement. Aminta had lost grasp of the semblance of the impassioned man. She just remembered enough of his eyes to think there might be healing in a sight of him.

Latterly she had refused to be exhibited to a tattling world as the great nobleman's conquest:—The *Beautiful Lady Doubtful* of a report that had scorched her ears. Theatres, rides, pleasure-drives, even such houses as she saw standing open to her had been shunned. Now she asked the earl to ride in the park.

He complied, and sent to the stables immediately, just noted another of her veerings. The whimsy creatures we are matched to contrast with, shift as the very winds or feather-grasses in the wind. Possibly a fine day did it. Possibly, too, her not being requested to do it.

He was proud of her bearing on horseback. She rode well and looked well. A finer weapon wherewith to strike at a churlish world was never given into the hands of man. These English may see in her, if they like, that they and their laws and customs

are defied. It does her no hurt, and it hits them a ringing buffet.

Among the cavaliers they passed was Mr. Morsfield. He rode by slowly. The earl stiffened his back in returning the salute. Both that and the gentleman were observed by Aminta.

"He sees to having good blood under him," said the earl.

"I admired his mount," she replied.

Interpreted by the fire of his writing, his features expressed character: insomuch that a woman could say of another woman, that she admired him and might reasonably do so. His gaze at her in the presence of her lord was audacious.

He had the defect of his virtue of courage. Yet a man indisputably possessing courage cannot but have an interesting face—though one may continue saying, Pity that the eyes are not a little wider apart! He dresses tastefully; the best English style. A portrait by a master hand might hand him down to generations as an ancestor to be proud of. But with passion and with courage, and a bent for snatching at the lion's own, does he not look foredoomed to an early close? Her imagination called up a portrait of Elizabeth's Earl of Essex to set beside him; and without thinking that the two were

fraternally alike, she sent him riding away with the face of the Earl of Essex and the shadow of the unhappy nobleman's grievous fortunes over his head.

But it is inexcusable to let the mind be occupied recurrently by a man who has not moved the feelings, wicked though it be to have the feelings moved by him. Aminta rebuked her silly wits, and proceeded to speculate from an altitude, seeing the man's projects in a singularly definite minuteness, as if the crisis he invoked, the perils he braved, the mute participation he implored of her for the short space until their fate should be decided, were a story sharply cut on metal. Several times she surprised herself in an interesting pursuit of the story; abominably cold, abominably interested. She fell upon a review of small duties of the day, to get relief; and among them a device for spiriting away her aunt from the table where Mrs. Lawrence wished to meet Lord Ormont. It sprang up to her call like an imp of the burning pit. She saw it ingenious and of natural aspect. I must be a born intriguer! she said in her breast. That was hateful; but it seemed worse when she thought of a woman commanding the faculty and consenting to be duped and foiled. That might be termed despicable; but

what if she had not any longer the wish to gain her way with her lord?

Those letters are acting like a kind of poison in me! her heart cried: and it was only her head that dwelt on the antidote.

CHAPTER XII.

MORE OF CUPER'S BOYS.

ENTERING the dining-room at the appointed minute in a punctual household, Mrs. Lawrence informed the company that she had seen a Horse Guards orderly at the trot up the street. Weyburn said he was directing a boy to ring the bell of the house for him. Lord Ormont went to the window.

"Amends and honours?" Mrs. Lawrence hummed: and added an operatic flourish of an arm. Something like it might really be imagined. A large square missive was handed to the footman. Thereupon the orderly trotted off.

My lord took seat at table, telling the footman to lay "that parcel" beside the clock on the mantelpiece. Aminta and Mrs. Lawrence gave out a little cry of bird or mouse, pitiable to hear: they could not wait, they must know, they pished at sight of plates. His look deferred to their good pleasure, like the dead hand of a clock under key; and

Weyburn placed the missive before him, seeing by the superscription that it was not official.

It was addressed, in the Roman hand of a boy's copybook writing, to

"General the Earl of Ormont, K.C.B., etc.,
Horse Guards,
London."

The earl's eyebrows creased up over the address; they came down low on the contents.

He resumed his daily countenance. "Nothing of importance," he said to the ladies.

Mrs. Lawrence knocked the table with her knuckles.

Aminta put out a hand, in sign of her wish.

"Pray let me see it."

"After lunch will do."

"No, no, no! We are women—we are women," cried Mrs. Lawrence.

"How can it concern women?"

"As well ask how a battle-field concerns them!"

"Yes, the shots hit us behind you," said Aminta; and she, too, struck the table.

He did not prolong their torture. Weyburn received the folio sheet and passed it on. Aminta

read. Mrs. Lawrence jumped from her chair and ran to the countess's shoulder; her red lips formed the petitioning word to the earl for the liberty she was bent to take.

"Peep? if you like," my lord said, jesting at the blank she would find, and soft to the pretty play of her mouth.

When the ladies had run to the end of it, he asked them: "Well; now then?"

"But it's capital—the dear laddies!" Mrs. Lawrence exclaimed.

Aminta's eyes met Weyburn's.

She handed him the sheet of paper; upon the transmission of which empty thing from the Horse Guards my lord commented: "An orderly!"

Weyburn scanned it rapidly, for the table had been served.

The contents were these:—

"HIGH BRENT NEAR ATTSWELL.

"*April 7th.*

"*To* GENERAL THE EARL OF ORMONT,

"*Cavalry.*

"May it please your Lordship, we, the boys of Mr. Cuper's school, are desirous to bring to the notice of the bravest officer England possesses now

living, a Deed of Heroism by a little boy and girl, children of our school laundress, aged respectively eight and six, who, seeing a little fellow in the water out of depth, and sinking twice, before the third time jumped in to save him, though unable to swim themselves; the girl aged six first, we are sorry to say, but the brother, Robert Coop, followed her example, and together they made a line, and she caught hold of the drowning boy, and he held her petycoats, and so they pulled. We have seen the place: it is not a nice one. They got him ashore at last. The park-keeper here going along found them dripping, rubbing his hands, and blowing into his nostrils. Name, T. Shellen, son of a small cobbler here, and recovered.

"May it please your Lordship, we make bold to apply, because you have been for a number of years, as far as the oldest can recollect, the Hero of our school, and we are so bold as to ask the favour of General Lord Ormont's name to head a subscription we are making to circulate for the support of their sick mother, who has fallen ill. We think her a good woman. Gentlemen and ladies of the neighbourhood are willing to subscribe. If we have a great name to head the list, we think we shall make a good subscription. Names:—

"Martha Mary Coop, mother.

"Robert Coop.

"Jane Coop, the girl, aged six.

"If we are not taking too great a liberty, a subscription paper will follow. We are sure General the Earl of Ormont's name will help to make them comfortable.

"We are obediently and respectfully,

"DAVID GOWEN,

"WALTER BENCH,

"JAMES PANNERS PARSONS,

"And seven others."

Weyburn spared Aminta an answering look, that would have been a begging of Browny to remember Matey.

"It's genuine," he said to Mrs. Lawrence, as he attacked his plate with the gusto for the repast previously and benignly observed by her. "It ought to be the work of some of the younger fellows."

"They spell correctly, on the whole."

"Excepting," said my lord, "an article they don't know much about yet."

Weyburn had noticed the word, and he smiled. "Said to be the happy state! The three signing their names are probably what we called bellman

and beemen, collector, and heads of the swarm—enthusiasts. If it is not the work of some of the younger hands, the school has levelled on minors. In any case it shows the school is healthy."

"I subscribe," said Mrs. Lawrence.

"The little girl aged six shall have something done for her," said Aminta, and turned her eyes on the earl.

He was familiar with her thrilled voice at a story of bravery. He said—

"The boys don't say the girl's brother turned tail."

"Only that the girl's brother aged eight followed the lead of the little girl aged six," Mrs. Lawrence remarked. "Well, I like the schoolboys, too—'we are sorry to say!' But they're good lads. Boys who can appreciate brave deeds are capable of doing them."

"Speak to me about it on Monday," the earl said to Weyburn.

He bowed, and replied—

"I shall have the day to-morrow. I'll walk it and call on Messrs." (he glanced at the paper) "Gowen, Bench, and Parsons. I have a German friend in London anxious to wear his legs down stumpier."

"The name of the school?"

"It is called Cuper's."

Aminta, on hearing the name of Cuper a second time, congratulated herself on the happy invention of her pretext to keep Mrs. Pagnell from the table at midday. Her aunt had a memory for names: what might she not have exclaimed! There would have been little in it, but it was as well that the "boy of the name of Weyburn" at Cuper's should be unmentioned. By an exaggeration peculiar to a disgust in fancy, she could hear her aunt vociferating "Weyburn!" and then staring at Mr. Weyburn opposite—perhaps not satisfied with staring.

He withdrew after his usual hearty meal, during which his talk of boys and their monkey tricks, and what we can train them to, had been pleasant generally, especially to Mrs. Lawrence. Aminta was carried back to the minute early years at High Brent. A line or two of a smile touched her cheek.

"Yes, my dear countess, that is the face I want for Lady de Culme to-day," said Mrs. Lawrence. "She likes a smiling face. Aunty-aunty has always been good; she has never been prim. I was too much for her, until I reflected that she was very old, and deserved to know the truth before she left us; and so I went to her; and then she said she wished to see the Countess of Ormont, because of

her being my dearest friend. I fancy she entertains an *arrière* idea of proposing her flawless niece Gracey, Marchioness of Fencaster, to present you. She's quite equal to the fatigue herself. You'll rejoice in her anecdotes. People were virtuous in past days: they counted their sinners. In those days, too, as I have to understand, the men chivalrously bore the blame, though the women were rightly punished. Now, alas! the initiative is with the women, and men are not asked for chivalry. Hence it languishes. Lady de Culme won't hear of the Queen of Blondes; has forbidden her these many years!"

Lord Ormont, to whom the lady's prattle was addressed, kept his visage moveless, except in slight jerks of the brows.

"What queen?"

"You insist upon renewing my old, old pangs of jealousy, my dear lord! The Queen of Cyprus, they called her, in the last generation; she fights our great duellist handsomely."

"My dear Mrs. Lawrence!"

"He triumphs finally, we know, but she beats him every round."

"It's only tattle that says the duel has begun."

"May is the month of everlasting beauty! There's

a widower marquis now who claims the right to cast the glove to any who dispute it."

"Mrs. May is too good-looking to escape from scandal."

"Amy May has the good looks of the Immortals."

"She can't be thirty."

"In the calendar of women she counts thirty-four."

"Malignity! Her husband's a lucky man."

"The shots have proved it."

Lord Ormont nodded his head over the hopeless task of defending a woman from a woman, and their sharp interchange ceased. But the sight of his complacency in defeat told Aminta that he did not respect his fair client: it drew a sketch of the position he allotted his wife before the world side by side with this Mrs. Amy May, though a Lady de Culme was persuaded to draw distinctions.

He had, however, quite complacently taken the dose intended for him by Mrs. Lawrence, who believed that the system of gently forcing him was the good one.

The ladies drove away in the afternoon. The earl turned his back on manuscript. He sent for a couple of walking-sticks, and commanded Weyburn

to go through his *parades.* He was no tyro, merely out of practice, and unacquainted with the later, simpler form of the great master of the French school, by which, at serious issues, the guarding of the line can be more quickly done: as, for instance, the *parade de septime* supplanting the slower *parade de prime;* the *parade de quarte* having advantage over the *parade de quinte;* the *parade de tierce* being readier and stronger than the *parade de sixte;* the same said for the *parade de seconde* instead of the weak *parade d'octave.*

These were then new points of instruction. Weyburn demonstrated them as neatly as he could do with his weapon.

"Yes, the French *think,*" Lord Ormont said, grasping the stick to get conviction of thumb-strength and finger-strength from the *parades* advocated; "their steel would thread the ribs of our louts before they could raise a cry of parry; so here they're pleased to sneer at fencing, as if it served no purpose but the duel. Fencing, for one thing, means, that with a good stick in his hand, a clever fencer can double up a giant or two, grant him choice of ground. Some of our men box; but the sword's the weapon for an officer, and precious few of 'em are fit for more than to kick the scabbard. Slash-

ing comes easier to them: a plaguey cut, if it does cut—say, one in six. Navy too. Their cutlass-drill is like a woman's fling of the arm to fetch a slap from behind her shoulder. Pinking beats chopping. These English 'll have their lesson. It's like what you call good writing: the simple way does the business, and that's the most difficult to learn, because you must give your head to it, as those French fellows do. *Trop de finesse* is rather their fault. Anything's better than loutishness. Well! the lesson 'll come."

He continued. He spoke as he thought: he was not speaking what he was thinking. His mind was directed on the visit of Aminta to Lady de Culme, and the tolerably wonderful twist whereby Mrs. Lawrence Finchley had vowed herself to his girl's interests. And he blamed neither of them; only he could not understand how it had been effected, for Aminta and Mrs. Lawrence had not been on such particularly intimate terms last week or yesterday. His ejaculation, "Women!" was, as he knew, merely ignorance roaring behind a mask of sarcasm. But it allied him with all previous generations on the male side, and that was its virtue. His view of the shifty turns of women got no further, for the reason that he took small account of the operations of the

feelings, to the sole exercise of which he by system condemned the sex.

He was also insensibly half a grain more soured by the homage of those poor school-boys, who called to him to take it for his reward in a country whose authorities had snubbed, whose Parliament had ignored, whose Press had abused him. The ridiculous balance made him wilfully oblivious that he had seen his name of late eulogised in articles and in books for the right martial qualities. Can a country treating a good soldier—not serving it for pay—in so scurvy a fashion, be struck too hard with our disdain? One cannot tell it in too plain a language how one despises its laws, its moralities, its sham of society. The Club, some choice anecdotists, two or three listeners to his dolences clothed as diatribes; a rubber, and the sight of his girl at home, composed, with a week's shooting now and then, his round of life now that she refused to travel. What a life for a soldier in his vigour!

Weyburn was honoured by the earl's company on the walk to Chiallo's. In the street of elegant shops they met Lord Adderwood, and he, as usual, appeared in the act of strangling one of his flock of yawns, with gentlemanly consideration for the public. Exercise was ever his temporary specific for these

incurables. Flinging off his coat, he cast away the cynic style engendering or engendered by them. He and Weyburn were for a bout. Sir John Randeller and Mr. Morsfield were at it, like Bull in training and desperado foiled. A French *maître d'armes,* famed in *escrime,* standing near Captain Chiallo, looked amused in the eyes, behind a mask of professional correctness. He had come on an excursion for the display of his art. Sir John's very sturdy defence was pierced. Weyburn saluted the Frenchman as an acquaintance, and they shook hands, chatted, criticised, nodded. Presently he and his adversary engaged, vizored and in their buckram, and he soon proved to be too strong for Adderwood, as the latter expected and had notified to Lord Ormont before they crossed the steel. My lord had a pleasant pricking excitement in the sound. There was a pretty display between Weyburn and the *escrimeur,* who neatly and kindly trifled, took a point and returned one, and at the finish complimented him. The earl could see that he had to be sufficiently alert.

Age mouthed an ugly word to the veteran insensible of it in his body, when a desire to be one with these pairs of nimble wrists and legs was like an old gamecock shown the pit and put back into

the basket. He left the place, carrying away an image of the coxcombical attitudinising of the man Morsfield at the *salut,* upon which he brought down his powers of burlesque.

My lord sketched the scene he had just quitted to a lady who had stopped her carriage. She was the still beautiful Mrs. Amy May, wife of the famous fighting captain. Her hair was radiant in a shady street; her eyelids tenderly toned round the almond enclosure of blue pebbles, bright as if shining from the seawash. The lips of the fair woman could be seen to say that they were sweet when, laughing or discoursing, they gave sight of teeth proudly her own, rivalling the regularity of the grin of dentistry. A Venus of nature was melting into a Venus of art, and there was a decorous concealment of the contest and the anguish in the process, for which Lord Ormont liked her well enough to wink benevolently at her efforts to cheat the world at various issues, and maintain her duel with Time. The world deserved that she should beat it, even if she had been all deception.

She let the subject of Mr. Morsfield pass without remark from her, until the exhaustion of open-air topics hinted an end of their conversation, and she said—

"We shall learn next week what to think of the civilians. I have heard Mr. Morsfield tell that he is *de première force.* Be on your guard. You are to know that I never forget a service, and you did me one once."

"You have reason . . . ?" said the earl.

"If anybody is the dragon to the treasure he covets he is a spadassin who won't hesitate at provocations. Adieu."

Lord Ormont's eye had been on Mr. Morsfield. He had seen what Mrs. Pagnell counselled her niece to let him see. He thanked Mr. Morsfield for a tonic that made him young with anticipations of bracing; and he set his head to work upon an advance half-way to meet the gentleman, and safely exclude his wife's name.

Monday brought an account of Cuper's boys. Aminta received it while the earl was at his papers for the morning's news of the weightier deeds of men.

They were the right boys, Weyburn said; his interview with Gowen, Bench, Parsons, and the others assured him that the school was breathing big lungs. Mr. Cuper, too, had spoken well of them.

"You walked the twenty miles?" Aminta interrupted him.

"With my German friend: out and home; plenty of time in the day. He has taken to English boys, but asks why enthusiasm and worship of great deeds don't grow upward from them to their elders. And I, in turn, ask why Germans insist on that point more even than the French do."

"Germans are sentimental. But the English boys he saw belonged to a school with traditions of enthusiasm sown by some one. The school remembered?"

"Curiously, Mr. Cuper tells me, the hero of the school has dropped and sprung up, stout as ever, twice—it tells me what I wish to believe—since Lord Ormont led their young heads to glory. He can't say how it comes. The tradition's there, and it's kindled by some flying spark."

"They remember who taught the school to think of Lord Ormont?"

"I'm a minor personage. I certainly did some good, and that's a push forward."

"They speak of you?"

It was Aminta more than the Countess of Ormont speaking to him.

"You take an interest in the boys," he said, glowing. "Yes, well, they have their talks. I happened to be a cricketer, counting wickets and scores. I don't fancy it's remembered that it was I preached my lord. A day of nine wickets and one catch doesn't die out of a school. The boy Gowen was the prime spirit in getting up the subscription for the laundress. But Bench and Parsons are good boys, too."

He described them, dwelt on them. The enthusiast, when not lyrical, is perilously near to boring. Aminta was glad of Mrs. Lawrence's absence. She had that feeling because Matthew Weyburn would shun talk of himself to her, not from a personal sense of tedium in hearing of the boys; and she was quaintly reminded by suggestions, coming she knew not whence, of a dim likeness between her and these boys of the school when their hero dropped to nothing and sprang up again brilliantly—a kind of distant cousinship, in her susceptibility to be kindled by so small a flying spark as this one on its travels out of High Brent. Moreover, the dear boys tied her to her girlhood, and netted her fleeting youth for the moth-box. She pressed to hear more and more of them, and of the school-laundress Weyburn had called to see, and particularly of the child, little

Jane, aged six. Weyburn went to look at the sheet of water to which little Jane had given celebrity over the county. The girl stood up to her shoulders when she slid off the bank and made the line for her brother to hold, he in the water as well. Altogether, Cuper's boys were justified in promoting a subscription, the mother being helpless.

"Modest little woman," he said of Jane. "We'll hope people won't spoil her. Don't forget, Lady Ormont, that the brother did his part; he had more knowledge of the danger than she."

"You will undertake to convey our subscriptions? Lord Ormont spoke of the little ones and the schoolboys yesterday."

"I'll be down again among them next Sunday, Lady Ormont. On the Monday I go to Olmer."

"The girls of High Brent subscribe?"

There was a ripple under Weyburn's gravity.

"Messrs. Gowen, Bench, and Parsons thought proper to stop Miss Vincent at the head of her detachment in the park."

"On the Sunday?"

"And one of them handed her a paper containing a report of their interview with Mrs. Coop and a

neat eulogy of little Jane. But don't suspect them, I beg. I believe them to be good, honest fellows. Bench, they say, is religious; Gowen has written verses; Parsons generally harum-scarum. They're boyish in one way or another, and that'll do. The cricket of the school has been low: seems to be reviving."

"Mr. Weyburn," said the countess, after a short delay—and Aminta broke through—"it pleases me to hear of them, and think they have not forgotten you, or, at least, they follow the lead you gave. I should like to know whether an idea I have is true: Is much, I mean constant, looking down on young people likely to pull one's mind down to their level?"

"Likely enough to betray our level, if there's danger," he murmured. "Society offers an example that your conjecture is not unfounded, Lady Ormont. But if we have great literature and an interest in the world's affairs, can there be any fear of it? The schoolmaster ploughs to make a richer world, I hope. He must live with them, join with them in their games, accustom them to have their heads knocked with what he wants to get into them, leading them all the while, as the bigger school-fellow does, if he is a good fellow. He has to be careful not to smell

of his office. Doing positive good is the business of his every day—on a small scale, but it's positive, if he likes his boys. Avaunt favouritism!—he must like all boys. And it's human nature not so far removed from the dog; only it's a supple human nature: there's the beauty of it. We train it. Nothing is more certain than that it will grow upward. I have the belief that I shall succeed, because I like boys, and they like me. It always was the case."

"I know," said Aminta.

Their eyes met. She looked moved at heart behind that deep forest of her chestnut eyes.

"And I think I can inspire confidence in fathers and mothers," he resumed. "I have my boys already waiting for me to found the school. I was pleased the other day: an English friend brought an Italian gentleman to see me and discuss my system, up at Norwood, at my mother's—a Signor Calliani. He has a nephew; the parents dote on him. The uncle confesses that the boy wants—he has got hold of our word—'pluck.' We had a talk. He has promised to send me the lad when I am established in Switzerland.

"When?" said Aminta.

"A relative from whom a Reversion comes is near

the end. It won't be later than September that I shall go. My Swiss friend has the school, and would take me at once before he retires."

"You make friends wherever you go," said Aminta.

"Why shouldn't everybody? I'm convinced it's because I show people I mean well, and I never nurse an injury, great or small. And besides, they see I look forward. I do hope good for the world. If at my school we have all nationalities—French boys and German, Italian, Russian, Spaniard—without distinction of race and religion and station, and with English intermixing—English games, English sense of honour and conception of gentleman—we shall help to nationalise Europe. Emile Grenat, Adolf Fleischer, and an Italian, Vincentino Chiuse, are prepared to start with me: and they are men of attainments; they will throw up their positions; they will do me the honour to trust to my leadership. It's not scaling Alps or commanding armies, true."

"It may be better," said Aminta, and thought as she spoke.

"Slow work, if we have a taste for the work, doesn't dispirit. Otherwise, one may say that an African or South American traveller has a more ex-

citing time. I shall manage to keep my head on its travels."

"You have ideas about the education of girls?"

"They can't be carried out unaided."

"Aid will come."

Weyburn's confidence, high though it was, had not mounted to that pitch.

"One may find a mate," he said. The woman to share and practically to aid in developing such ideas is not easily found: that he left as implied.

Aminta was in need of poetry; but the young schoolmaster's plain, well-directed prose of the view of a business in life was welcome to her.

Lord Ormont entered the room. She reminded him of the boys of High Brent and the heroine Jane. He was ready to subscribe his five-and-twenty guineas, he said. The amount of the sum gratified Weyburn, she could see. She was proud of her lord, and of the boys and the little girl; and she would have been happy to make the ardent young schoolmaster aware of her growing interest in the young.

The night before the earl's departure on the solitary expedition to which she condemned him, he surprised her with a visit of farewell, so that he need not disturb her in the early morning, he said. She

was reading beside her open jewel-box, and she closed it with the delicate touch of a hand turned backward while listening to him, with no sign of nervousness.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAR AT OLMER.

LIVELY doings were on the leap to animate Weyburn at Olmer during Easter week. The Rev. Mr. Hampton-Evey, rector of Barborough, on hearing that Lady Charlotte Eglett was engaged in knocking at the doors of litigation with certain acts that constituted distinct breaches of the law and the peace, and were a violation of the rights of her neighbour, Mr. Gilbert Addicote, might hope that the troublesome parishioner whom he did not often number among his congregation would grant him a term of repose. Therein he was deceived. Alterations and enlargements of the church, much required, had necessitated the bricking up of a door regarded by the lady as the private entrance to the Olmer pew. She sent him notice of her intention to batter at the new brickwork; so there was the prospect of a pew-fight before him. But now she came to sit under him every Sunday; and he could have wished her absent, for she diverted his thoughts from piety to

the selection of texts applicable in the case of a woman who sat with arms knotted, and the frown of an intemperate school-girl forbidden speech; while her pew's firelight startlingly at intervals danced her sinister person into view, as from below. The lady's inaccessible and unconquerable obtuseness to exhortation informed the picture with an evil spirit that cried for wrestlings.

Regularly every week-day she headed the war now raging between Olmer and Addicotes, on the borders of the estates. It was open war, and herself to head the cavalry. Weyburn, driving up a lane in the gig she had sent to meet the coach, beheld a thicket of countrymen and boys along a ridge; and it swayed and broke, and through it burst the figure of a mounted warrior woman at the gallop, followed by what bore an appearance of horse and gun, minus carriage, drivers at the flanks cracking whips on foot. Off went the train, across a small gorse common, through a gate.

"That's another down," said his whip.

"Sound good wood it is, not made to fall. Her ladyship's at it hard to-day. She'll teach Mr. Addicote a thing or two about things females can do. That is, when they stand for their rights."

He explained to Weyburn that Mr. Addicote, a

yeoman farmer and a good hunting man, but a rare obstinate one, now learning his lesson from her ladyship, was in dispute with her over rights of property on a stretch of fir-trees lining the ridge where the estates of Olmer and Addicotes met. Her ladyship had sworn that if he did not yield to her claim she would cut down every tree of the ridge and sell the lot for timber under his nose. She acted according to her oath, in the teeth of his men two feet across the border. All the world knew the roots of those trees were for the most part in Olmer soil, though Addicote shared the shade. All the people about mourned for the felling of those trees. All blamed Mr. Gilbert Addicote for provoking her ladyship, good hunting man though he was. But as to the merits of the question, under the magnifier of the gentlemen of the law, there were as many different opinions as wigs in the land.

"And your opinion?" said Weyburn.

To which the young groom answered: "Oh, I don't form an opinion, sir. I'm of my mistress's opinion; and if she says, Do it, think as we like, done it has to be."

Lady Charlotte came at a trot through the gate, to supervise the limbering-up of another felled tree.

She headed it as before. The log dragged bounding and twirling, rattling its chains; the crowd along the ridge, forbidden to cheer, watching it with intense repression of the roar. We have not often in England sight of a great lady challenging an unpopular man to battle and smacking him in the face like this to provoke him. Weyburn was driven on a half-circle of the lane to the gate, where he jumped out to greet Lady Charlotte trotting back for another smack in the face of her enemy,—a third rounding of her Troy with the vanquished dead at her heels, as Weyburn let a flimsy suggestion beguile his fancy, until the Homeric was overwhelming even to a playful mind, and he put her in a mediæval frame. She really had the heroical aspect in a grandiose-grotesque, fitted to some lines of Ariosto. Her head wore a close hood, disclosing a fringe of grey locks, owlish to see about features hooked for action.

"Ah, you! there you are: good—I'll join you in three minutes," she sang out to him, and cantered to the ridge.

Hardly beyond the stated number she was beside him again, ranging her steed for the victim log to dance a gyration on its branches across the lane and enter a field among the fallen compeers. One of her men had run behind her. She slid from

her saddle and tossed him the reins, catching up her skirts.

"That means war, as much as they'll have it in England," she said, seeing his glance at the logs. "My husband's wise enough to leave it to me, so I save him trouble with neighbours. An ass of a Mr. Gilbert Addicote dares us to make good our claim on our property, our timber, because half a score of fir-tree roots go stretching on to his ground."

She swished her whip. Mr. Gilbert Addicote received the stroke and retired, a buried subject. They walked on at an even pace. "You'll see Leo to-morrow. He worships you. You may as well give him a couple of hours' coaching a day for the week. He'll be hanging about you, and you won't escape him. Well, and my brother Rowsley: how is Lord Ormont? He never comes to me now, since—— Well, it's nothing to me; but I like to see my brother. She can't make any change here." Olmer and Lady Charlotte's bosom were both implied. "What do you think?—you've noticed: is he in good health? It's the last thing he'll be got to speak of."

Weyburn gave the proper assurances.

"Not he!" said she. "He's never ill. Men beat women in the long race, if they haven't overdone it when young. My doctor wants me to renounce the

saddle. He says it's time. Not if I've got work for horseback!" she nicked her head emphatically: "I hate old age. They sha'n't dismount me till a blow comes. Hate it! But I should despise myself if I showed signs, like a worm under heel. Let Nature do her worst; she can't conquer us as long as we keep up heart. You won't have to think of that for a good time yet. Now tell me why Lord Ormont didn't publish the 'Plan for the Defence' you said he was writing; and he was, I know. He wrote it and he finished it; you made the fair copy. Well, and he read it,—there! see!" She took the invisible sheets in her hands and tore them. "That's my brother. He's so proud. It would have looked like asking the country, that injured him, to forgive him. I wish it had been printed. But whatever he does I admire. That—she might have advised, if she'd been a woman of public spirit or cared for his reputation. He never comes near me. Did she read your copy?"

The question was meant for an answer.

Weyburn replied: "Lady Ormont had no sight of it."

"Ah! she's Lady Ormont to the servants, I know. She has an aunt living in the house. If my brother's a sinner, and there's punishment for him, he has it

from that aunt. Pag . . . . something. He bears with her. He's a Spartan. She's his pack on his back, for what she covers and the game he plays. It looks just tolerably decent with her in the house. She goes gabbling a story about our Embassy at Madrid. To preserve propriety, as they call it. Her niece doesn't stoop to any of those tricks, I'm told. I like her for that."

Weyburn was roused: "I think you would like Lady Ormont, if you knew her, my lady."

"The chances of my liking the young woman are not in the dice-box. You call her Lady Ormont: you are not one of the servants. Don't call her Lady Ormont to me."

"It is her title, Lady Charlotte."

She let fly a broadside at him.

"You are one of the woman's dupes. I thought you had brains. How can you be the donkey not to see that my brother Rowsley, Lord Ormont, would never let a woman, lawfully bearing his name, go running the quadrille over London in couples with a Lady Staines and a Mrs. Lawrence Finchley, Lord Adderwood, and that man Morsfield, who boasts of your Lady Ormont, and does it unwhipped—tell me why? Pooh, you must be the poorest fool born to suppose it possible my brother would allow a man

Morsfield to take his wife's name in his mouth a second time. Have you talked much with this young person?"

"With Lady Ormont? I have had the honour occasionally."

"Stick to the title and write yourself plush-breech. Can't you be more than a footman? Try to be a man of the world; you're old enough for that by now. I know she's good-looking; the whole tale hangs on that. You needn't be singing me mooncalf hymn tunes of 'Lady Ormont, Lady Ormont,' solemn as a parson's clerk; the young woman brought good looks to market; and she got the exchange she had a right to expect. But it's not my brother Rowsley's title she has got—except for footmen and tradesmen. When there's a true Countess of Ormont! . . . . Unless my brother has cut himself from his family. Not he. He's not mad."

They passed through Olmer park-gates. Lady Charlotte preceded him, and she turned, waiting for him to rejoin her. He had taken his flagellation in the right style, neither abashed nor at sham crow: he was easy, ready to converse on any topic; he kept the line between supple courtier and sturdy independent; and he was a pleasant figure of a young fellow. Thinking which, a reminder that she liked

him drew her by the road of personal feeling, as usual with her, to reflect upon another, and a younger, woman's observing and necessarily liking him too.

"You say you fancy I should like the person you call Lady Ormont?"

"I believe you would, my lady."

"Are her manners agreeable?"

"Perfect; no pretension."

"Ah! she sings, plays—all that?"

"She plays the harp and sings."

"You have heard her?"

"Twice."

"She didn't set you mewing?"

"I don't remember the impulse; at all events, it was restrained."

"She would me; but I'm an old woman. I detest their squalling and strumming. I can stand it with Italians on the boards: they don't stop conversation. She was present at that fencing-match where you plucked a laurel? I had an account of it. I can't see the use of fencing in this country. Younger women can, I dare say. Now, look. If we're to speak of her, I can't call her Lady Ormont, and I don't want to hear you. Give me her Christian name."

"It is"—Weyburn found himself on a slope without a stay—"Aminta."

Lady Charlotte's eye was on him. He felt intolerably hot; his vexation at the betrayal of the senseless feeling made it worse, a conscious crimson.

"Aminta," said she, rather in the style of Cuper's boys, when the name was a strange one to them. "I remember my Italian master reading out a poem when I was a girl. I read poetry then. You wouldn't have imagined that. I did, and liked it. I hate old age. It changes you so. None of my children know me as I was when I had life in me and was myself, and my brother Rowsley called me Cooey. They think me a hard old woman. I was Cooey through the woods and over the meadows and down stream to Rowsley. Old age is a prison wall between us and young people. They see a miniature head and bust, and think it a flattery—won't believe it. After I married I came to understand that the world we are in is a world to fight in, or under we go. But I pity the young who have to cast themselves off and take up arms. Young women above all."

Why had she no pity for Aminta? Weyburn asked it of his feelings, and he had the customary insurgent reply from them.

"You haven't seen Steignton yet," she continued. "No place on earth is equal to Steignton for me. It's got the charm. Here at Olmer I'm a mother and a grandmother—the 'devil of an old woman' my neighbours take me to be. She hasn't been to Steignton either. No, and won't go there, though she's working her way round, she supposes. He'll do everything for his 'Aminta,' but he won't take her to Steignton. I'm told now she's won Lady de Culme. That Mrs. Lawrence Finchley has dropped the curtsey to her great-aunt and sworn to be a good girl, for a change, if Lady de Culme will do the chaperon, and force Lord Ormont's hand. My brother shrugs. There'll be a nice explosion one day soon. Presented? The Court won't have her. That I know for positive. If she's pushed forward, she'll be bitterly snubbed. It's on the heads of those women—silly women! I can't see the game Mrs. Lawrence Finchley's playing. She'd play for fun. If they'd come to me, I'd tell them I've proof she's not the Countess of Ormont: positive proof. You look? I have it. I hold something; and not before,—(he may take his Aminta to Steignton, he may let her be presented, she may wear his name publicly, I say he's laughing at them, snapping his fingers at them louder and louder the more they

seem to be pushing him into a corner, until—I know my brother Rowsley!—and, poor dear fellow! a man like that, the best cavalry general England ever had: —they'll remember it when there comes a cry for a general from India: that's the way with the English; only their necessities teach them to be just!)—he to be reduced to be out-manœuvring a swarm of women, —I tell them, not before my brother Rowsley comes to me for what he handed to my care and I keep safe for him, will I believe he has made or means to make his Aminta Countess of Ormont."

They were at the steps of the house. Turning to Weyburn there, the inexhaustible Lady Charlotte remarked that their conversation had given her pleasure. Leo was hanging on to one of his hands the next minute. A small girl took the other. Philippa and Beatrice were banished damsels.

Lady Charlotte's breath had withered the aspect of Aminta's fortunes. Weyburn could forgive her, for he was beginning to understand her. He could not pardon "her brother Rowsley," who loomed in his mind incomprehensible, and therefore black. Once he had thought the great General a great man. He now regarded him as a mere soldier, a soured veteran; socially as a masker and a trifler, virtually

a callous angler playing his cleverly-hooked fish for pastime.

What could be the meaning of Lady Charlotte's "that man Morsfield, who boasts of your Lady Ormont, and does it unwhipped?"

Weyburn stopped his questioning, with the reflection that he had no right to recollect her words thus accurately.

The words, however, stamped Morsfield's doings and sayings and postures in the presence of Aminta with significance. When the ladies were looking on at the fencers, Morsfield's perfect coxcombry had been noticeable. He knew the art of airing a fine figure. Mrs. Lawrence Finchley had spoken of it, and Aminta had acquiesced; in the gravely simple manner of women who may be thinking of it much more intently than the vivacious prattler. Aminta confessed to an admiration of masculine physical beauty; the picador, matador, of the Spanish ring called up an undisguised glow that English ladies show coldly when they condescend to let it be seen; as it were, a line or two of colour on the wintriest of skies. She might, after all, at heart be one of the leisured, jewelled, pretty-winged; the spending, never harvesting, world she claimed and sought to enter. And what a primitive world it was!—world

of the glittering beast and the not too swiftly flying prey; the savage passions clothed in silk. Surely desire to belong to it writes us poor creatures. Mentally, she could hardly be maturer than the hero-worshipping girl in the procession of Miss Vincent's young seminarists. Probably so, but she carried magic. She was of the order of women who walk as the goddesses of old, bearing the gift divine. And, by the way, she had the step of the goddess. Weyburn repeated to himself the favourite familiar line expressive of the glorious walk, and accused Lord Ormont of being in cacophonous accordance with the perpetual wrong of circumstance, he her possessor, the sole person of her sphere insensible to the magic she bore! So ran his thought.

The young man chose to conceive that he thought abstractedly. He was, in truth, often casting about for the chances of his meeting on some fortunate day the predestined schoolmaster's wife: a lady altogether praiseworthy for carrying principles of sound government instead of magic. Consequently, susceptible to woman's graces though he knew himself to be, Lady Ormont's share of them hung in the abstract for him. His hopes were bent on an early escape to Switzerland and his life's work.

Lady Charlotte mounted to ride to the battle

daily. She talked of her brother Rowsley, and of "Aminta," and provoked an advocacy of the Countess of Ormont, and trampled the pleas and defences to dust, much in the same tone as on the first day; sometimes showing a peep of sweet humaneness, like the ripe berry of a bramble, and at others rattling thunder at the wretch of a woman audacious enough to pretend to a part in her brother's title.

Not that she had veneration for titles. She considered them a tinsel, and the devotee on his knee-caps to them a lump for a kick. Adding: "Of course I stand for my class; and if we can't have a manlier people—and it's not likely in a country treating my brother so badly—well, then, let things go on as they are." But it was the pretension to a part in the name of Ormont which so violently offended the democratic aristocrat, and caused her to resent it as an assault on the family honour, by "a woman springing up out of nothing"—*i.e.* a woman of no distinctive birth.

She was rational in her fashion; or Weyburn could at least see where and how the reason in her took a twist. The Rev. Mr. Hampton-Evey would not see it; he was, in charity to her ladyship, of a totally contrary opinion, he informed Weyburn. The laborious pastor and much-enduring Churchman met

my lady's apologist as he was having a swing of the legs down the lanes before breakfast, and he fell upon a series of complaints, which were introduced by a declaration that "he much feared" her ladyship would have a heavy legal bill to pay for taking the law into her hands up at Addicotes.

Her ladyship might, if she pleased, he said, encourage her domestics and her husband's tenants and farm-labourers to abandon the church for the chapel, and go, as she had done and threatened to do habitually, to the chapel herself; but to denounce the ritual of the Orthodox Church under the denomination of "barbarous," to say of the invoking supplications of the service, that they were—she had been heard to state it more or less publicly and repeatedly—suitable to abject ministers and throngs at the court of an Indian rajah, *that* he did not hesitate to term highly unbecoming in a lady of her station, subversive and unchristian. The personal burdens inflicted on him by her ladyship he prayed for patience to endure. He surprised Weyburn in speaking of Lady Charlotte as "educated and accomplished." She was rather more so than Weyburn knew, and more so than was common among the great ladies of her time.

Weyburn strongly advised the reverend gentle-

man on having it out with Lady Charlotte in a personal interview. He sketched the great lady's combative character on a foundation of benevolence, and stressed her tolerance for open dealing, and the advantage gained by personal dealings with her—after a mauling or two. His language and his illustrations touched an old-school chord in the Rev. Mr. Hampton-Evey, who hummed over the project, profoundly disrelishing the introductory portion.

"Do me the honour to call and see me to-morrow, after breakfast, before her ladyship starts for the fray on Addicote heights," Weyburn said; "and I will ask your permission to stand by you. Her bark is terrific, we know; and she can bite, but there's no venom."

Finally, on a heave of his chest, Mr. Hampton-Evey consented to call, in the interests of peace.

Weyburn had said it must be "man to man with her, facing her and taking steps"; and, although the prospect was unpleasant to repulsiveness, it was a cheerful alternative beside Mr. Hampton-Evey's experiences and anticipations of the malignant black power her ladyship could be when she was not faced.

"Let the man come," said Lady Charlotte. Her shoulders intimated readiness for him.

She told Weyburn he might be present—insisted

to have him present. During the day Weyburn managed to slide in observations on the favourable reports of Mr. Hampton-Evey's work among the poor —emollient doses that irritated her to fret and paw, as at a checking of her onset.

In the afternoon the last disputed tree on the Addicotes' ridge was felled and laid in Olmer ground. Riding with Weyburn and the joyful Leo, she encountered Mr. Eglett and called out the news. He remarked, in the tone of philosophy proper to a placable country gentleman obedient to government on foreign affairs: "Now for the next act. But no more horseback now, mind!"

She muttered of not recollecting a promise. He repeated the interdict. Weyburn could fancy seeing her lips form words of how she hated old age.

He had been four days at Olmer, always facing her, "man to man," in the matter of Lady Ormont, not making way at all, but holding firm, and winning respectful treatment. They sat alone in her private room, where, without prelude, she discharged a fiery squib at impudent hussies caught up to the saddle-bow of a hero for just a canter, and pretending to a permanent seat beside him.

"You have only to see Lady Ormont; you will

admit the justice of her claim, my lady," said he; and as evidently he wanted a fight, she let him have it.

"You try to provoke me; you take liberties. You may call the woman Aminta, I've told you; you insult me when you call the woman by my family name."

"Pardon me, my lady: I have no right to call Lady Ormont Aminta."

"You've never done so, eh? Say!"

She had him at the edge of the precipice. He escaped by saying, "Her Christian name was asked the other day, and I mentioned it. She is addressed by me as Lady Ormont."

"And by her groom and her footman. They all do; it's the indemnity to that class of young woman. Her linendraper is Lady-Ormonting as you do. I took you for a gentleman. Let me hear you give her that title again, you shall hear her true one, that the world fits her with, from me."

The time was near the half-hour bell before dinner, the situation between them that of the fall of the breath to fetch words electrical. She left it to him to begin the fight, and was not sorry that she had pricked him for it.

A footman entered the room, bearer of a missive

for Mr. Weyburn. Lord Ormont's groom had brought it from London.

"Send in the man," said Lady Charlotte.

Weyburn read:—

"The Countess of Ormont begs Mr. Weyburn to return instantly. There has been an accident in his home. It may not be very serious. An arm—a shock to the system from a fall. Messenger informs her, fear of internal hæmorrhage. Best doctors in attendance."

He handed Lady Charlotte the letter. She humped at the first line, flashed across the remainder, and in a lowered voice asked—

"Sister in the house?"

"My mother," Weyburn said.

The groom appeared. He knew nothing. The Countess had given him orders to spare no expense on the road to Olmer, without a minute's delay. He had ridden and driven.

He looked worn. Lady Charlotte rang the bell for her butler. To him she said—

"See that this man has a good feed of meat, any pasty you have, and a bottle of port wine. He has earned a pipe of tobacco; make up a bed for him. Despatch at once any one of the stable-boys to Loughton—the Dolphin. Mr. Leeman there will

have a chariot, fly, gig, anything, ready-horses in three hours from now. See Empsom yourself; he will put my stepper Mab to the light trap; no delay. Have his feed at Loughton. Tell Mrs. Maples to send up now, here, a tray, whatever she has, within five minutes—not later. A bottle of the Peace of Amiens Chambertin—Mr. Eglett's. You understand. Mrs. Maples will pack a basket for the journey; she will judge. Add a bottle of the Waterloo Bordeaux. Wait: a dozen of Mr. Eglett's cigars. Brisk with all the orders. Go."

She turned to Weyburn. "You pack your portmanteau faster than a servant will do it."

He ran up-stairs.

She was beside the tray to welcome and inspirit his eating, and she performed the busy butler's duty in pouring out wine for him. It was a toned old Burgundy, happy in the year of its birth, the grandest of instruments to roll the gambol-march of the Dionysiaca through the blood of this frame and sound it to the spirit. She spoke no word of his cause for departure. He drank, and he felt what earth can do to cheer one of her stricken children and strengthen the beat of a heart with a dread like a shot in it.

She, while he flew supporting the body of his

most beloved to the sun of Life in brighter hope, reckoned the stages of his journey.

"Leeman at Loughton will post you through the night to Mersley. Wherever you bait, it is made known that you come from Olmer, and are one of us. That passes you on up to London. Where can Lord Ormont be now?"

"In Paris."

"Still in Paris? He leaves her. She did well to send as she did. You will not pay for the posting along the road."

"I will pay for myself—I have a purse," Weyburn said; and continued, "Oh, my lady, there is Mr. Hampton-Evey to-morrow morning: I promised to stand by him."

"I'll explain," said Lady Charlotte. "He shall not miss you. If he strips the parson and comes as a man and a servant of the poor, he has nothing to fear. You've done? The night before my brother Rowsley's first duel I sat with him at supper and poured his wine out, and knew what was going to happen, didn't say a word. No use in talking about feelings. Besides, death is only the other side of the ditch, and one or other of us must go foremost. Now then, good-bye. Empson's waiting by this time. Mr. Eglett and Leo shall hear the excuses from me.

Think of anything you may want, while I count ten."

She held his hand. He wanted her to be friendly to Lady Ormont, but could not vex her at the last moment, touched as he was by her practical kindness.

She pressed his hand and let it go.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD LOVERS NEW FRIENDS.

THE cottage inhabited by Weyburn's mother was on the southern hills over London. He reached it late in the afternoon. His mother's old servant, Martha, spied the roadway at the gate of the small square of garden. Her steady look without welcome told him the scene he would meet beyond the door, and was the dead in her eyes. He dropped from no height; he stood on a level with the blow. His apprehensions on the road had lowered him to meet it.

"Too late, Martha?"

"She's in heaven, my dear."

"She is lying alone?"

"The London doctor left half an hour back. She's gone. Slipped, and fell, coming from her room, all the way down. She prayed for grace to see her son. She'll watch over him, be sure. You'll not find it lone and cold. A lady sits with it—

Lady Ormont, they call her—a very kind lady. My mistress liked her voice. Ever since news of the accident, up to ten at night; and never eats or drinks more than a poor tiny bit of bread-and-butter, with a teacup."

Weyburn went up-stairs.

Aminta sat close to the bedside in a darkened room. They greeted silently. He saw the white shell of the life that had flown; he took his mother's hand and kissed it, and knelt, clasping it.

Fear of disturbing his prayer kept Aminta seated.

Death was a stranger to him. The still warm, half-cold, nerveless hand smote the fact of things as they were through the prayer for things as we would have them. The vitality of his prayer was the sole light he had. It drew sustainment from the dead hand in his grasp, and cowered down to the earth claiming all we touch. He tried to summon vision of a soaring spirituality; he could not; his understanding and senses were too stricken. He prayed on. His prayer was as a little fountain, not rising high out of earth, and in the clutch of death; but its being it had from death, his love gave it food.

Prayer is power within us to communicate with the desired beyond our thirsts. The goodness of the dear good mother gone was in him for assurance

of a breast of goodness to receive her, whatever the nature of the eternal secret may be. The good life gone lives on in the mind; the bad has but a life in the body, and that not lasting,—it extends, dispreads, it worms away, it perishes. Need we more to bid the mind perceive through obstructive flesh the God who reigns, a devil vanquished? Be certain that it is the pure mind we set to perceive. The God discerned in thought is another than he of the senses. And let the prayer be as a little fountain. Rising on a spout, from dread of the hollow below, the prayer may be prolonged in words begetting words, and have a pulse of fervour: the spirit of it has fallen after the first jet. That is the delirious energy of our craving, which has no life in our souls. We do not get to any heaven by renouncing the Mother we spring from; and when there is an eternal secret for us, it is best to believe that Earth knows, to keep near her, even in our utmost aspirations.

Weyburn still knelt. He was warned to quit the formal posture of an exhausted act by the thought, that he had come to reflect upon how he might be useful to his boys in a like calamity.

Having risen, he became aware, that for some time of his kneeling Aminta's hand had been on his head, and they had raised their souls in unison. It

was a soul's link. They gazed together on the calm, rapt features.

They passed from the room.

"I cannot thank you," he said.

"Oh no; I have the reason for gratitude," said she. "I have learnt to know and love her, and hope I may imitate when my time is near."

"She . . . at the last?"

"Peacefully; no pain. The breath had not left her very long before you came."

"I said I cannot; but I must."

"Do not."

"Not in speech, then."

They went into the tasteful little sitting-room below, where the stillness closed upon them as a consciousness of loss.

"You have comforted her each day," he said.

"It has been my one happiness."

"I could not wish for better than for her to have known you."

"Say that for me. I have gained. She left her last words for you with me. They were love, love . . . pride in her son: thanks to God for having been thought worthy to give him birth."

"She was one of the noble women of earth."

"She was your mother. Let me not speak any

more. I think I will now go. I am rarely given to these——"

The big drops were falling.

"You have not ordered your carriage?"

"It brings me here. I find my way home."

"Alone?"

"I like the independence."

"At night, too!"

"Nothing harmed me. Now it is daylight. A letter arrived for you from High Brent this morning. I forgot to bring it. Yesterday two of your pupils called here. Martha saw them."

Her naming of the old servant familiarly melted him.

"You will not bear to hear praise or thanks."

"If I deserved them. I should like you to call on Dr. Buxton; he will tell you more than we can. He drove with me the first day, after I had sent you the local doctor's report. I had it from the messenger, his assistant."

Weyburn knew Dr. Buxton's address. He begged her to stay and take some nourishment; ventured a remark on her wasted look.

"It is poor fare in cottages."

"I have been feeding on better than bread and meat," she said. "I should have eaten if I had felt

appetite. My looks will recover, such as they are. I hope I have grown out of them; they are a large part of the bondage of women. You would like to see me safe into some conveyance. Go up-stairs for a few minutes; I will wait here."

He obeyed her. Passing from the living to the dead, from the dead to the living, they were united in his heart.

Her brevity of tone, and her speech, so practical upon a point of need, under a crisis of distress, reminded him of Lady Charlotte at the time of the groom's arrival with her letter.

Aminta was in no hurry to drive. She liked walking and looking down on London, she said.

"My friend and schoolmate, Selina Collett, comes to me at Whitsuntide. We have taken a house on the Upper Thames, above Marlow. You will come and see us, if you can be persuaded to leave your boys. We have a boathouse, and a bathing-plank for divers. The stream is quiet there between rich meadows. It seems to flow as if it *thought*. I am not poetical; I tell you only my impression. You shall be a great deal by yourself, as men prefer to be."

"As men are forced to be—I beg!" said he. "Division is against my theories."

"We might help, if we understood one another,

I have often fancied. I know something of your theories. I should much like to hear you some day on the scheme of the school in Switzerland, and also on the schoolmaster's profession. She whom we have lost was full of it, and spoke of it to me as much as her weakness would permit. The subject seemed to give her strength."

"She has always encouraged me," said Weyburn. "I have lost her, but I shall feel that she is not absent. She had ideas of her own about men and women."

"Some she mentioned."

"And about marriage."

"That too."

Aminta shook herself out of a sudden stupor.

"Her mind was very clear up to the last hour upon all the subjects interesting her son. She at one time regretted his not being a soldier, for the sake of his father's memory. Then she learned to think he could do more for the world as the schoolmaster. She said you can persuade."

"We had our talks. She would have the reason, if she was to be won. I like no other kind of persuasion."

"I long to talk over the future school with you. That is, to hear your plans."

They were at the foot of the hill, in view of an inn announcing livery stables. She wished to walk the whole distance. He shook his head.

The fly was ready for her soon, and he begged to see her safe home. She refused, after taking her seat, but said: "At any other time. We are old friends. You will really go through the ceremony of consulting me about the school?"

He replied: "I am honoured."

"Ah, not to me," said Aminta. "We will be the friends we—— You will not be formal with me?—not from this day?"

She put out her hand. He took it gently. The dead who had drawn them together withheld a pressure.

Holding the hand, he said: "I shall crave leave of absence for some days."

"I shall see you on the day," said she.

"If it is your desire: I will send word."

"We both mourn at heart. We should be in company. Adieu."

Their hands fell apart. They looked. The old school-time was in each mind. They saw it as a shore-bank in grey outline across morning mist. Years were between; and there was a division of

circumstance, more repelling than an abyss or the rush of deep wild waters.

Neither of them had regrets. Under their cloud, and with the grief they shared, they were as happy as two could be in recovering one another as friends.

On the day of the funeral Aminta drove to the spot where they had parted; she walked to the churchyard. She followed the coffin to its gravel-heap, wishing neither to see nor be seen, only that she might be so far attached to the remains of the dead; and the sense of blessedness she had in her bowed simplicity of feeling was as if the sainted dead had cleansed and anointed her.

When the sods had been cast on, the last word spoken, she walked her way back, happy in being alone, unnoticed. She was grateful to the chief mourner for letting her go as she had come. That helped her to her sense of purification, the haven out of the passions, hardly less quiet than the repose into which the dear dead woman, his mother, had entered.

London lay beneath her. The might of the great hive hummed at the verge of her haven of peace without disturbing. There she had been what none had known of her: an ambitious girl, modest merely

for lack of intrepidity; paralysed by her masterful lord; aiming her highest at a gilt weathercock; and a disappointed creature, her breast a home of serpents; never herself. She thought and hoped she was herself now. Alarm lest this might be another of her moods, victim of moods as she had latterly been, was a shadow armed with a dart playing round her to find the weak spot. It sprang from her acknowledged weakness of nature; and she cast about for how to keep it outside her and lean on a true though a small internal support. She struck at her desires, to sound them.

They were yesterday for love; partly for distinction, for a woman having beauty to shine in the sphere of beauty; but chiefly to love and be loved, therefore to live. She had yesterday read letters of a man who broke a music from the word—about as much music as there is in a tuning-fork, yet it rang and lingered; and he was not the magical musician. Now those letters were as dust of the road. The sphere of beauty was a glass lamp-globe for delirious moths. She had changed. Belief in the real change gave her full view of the compliant coward she had been.

Her heart assured her she had natural courage. She felt that it could be stubborn to resist a soft-

ness. Now she cared no more for the hackneyed musical word; friendship was her desire. If it is not life's poetry, it is a credible prose; a land of low undulations instead of Alps; beyond the terrors and the deceptions. And she could trust her friend: he who was a singular constancy. His mother had told her of his preserving letters of a girl he loved when at school; and of his journeys to an empty house at Dover. That was past; but, as the boy, so the man would be in sincerity of feeling—trustworthy to the uttermost.

She mused on the friend. He was brave. She had seen how he took his blow, and sorrow as a sister, conquering emotion. It was not to be expected of him by one who knew him when at school. Had he faults? He must have faults. She, curiously, could see none. After consenting to his career as a schoolmaster, and seeing nothing ludicrous in it, she endowed him with the young school-hero's reputation, beheld him with the eyes of the girl who had loved him—and burnt his old letters! bitterly regretted that she burnt his letters!—and who had applauded his contempt of ushers and master opposing his individual will and the thing he thought it right to do.

Musing thus, she turned a corner, on a sudden,

in her mind, and ran against a mirror, wherein a small figure running up to meet her, grew large and nodded, with the laugh and eyes of Browny. So little had she changed! The steadfast experienced woman rebuked that volatile, and some might say, faithless girl. But the girl had her answer: she declared they were one and the same, affirmed that the years between were a bad night's dream, that her heart had been faithful, that he who conjures visions of romance in a young girl's bosom must always have her heart, as a crisis will reveal it to her. She had the volubility of the mettled Browny of old, and was lectured. When she insisted on shouting "Matey! Matey!" she was angrily spurned and silenced.

Aminta ceased to recline in her carriage. An idea that an indolent posture fostered vapourish meditations, counselled her sitting rigidly upright and interestedly observing the cottages and merry gutter-children along the squat straight streets of a London suburb. Her dominant ultimate thought was, "I, too, can work!" Like her courage, the plea of a capacity to work appealed for confirmation to the belief which exists without demonstrated example; and as she refrained from probing to the inner sources of that mental outcry, it was allowed

to stand and remain among the convictions we store —wherewith to shape our destinies.

Childishly indeed, quite witlessly, she fell into a trick of repeating the name of Matthew Weyburn in her breast and on her lips, after the manner of Isabella Lawrence Finchley, when she had inquired for his Christian name, and went on murmuring it, as if sucking a new bonbon, with the remark: "It sounds nice, it suits the mouth." Little Selina Collett had told, Aminta remembered, how those funny boys at Cuper's could not at first get the name "Aminta" to suit the mouth, but went about making hideous faces in uttering it. She smiled at the recollection, and thought, up to a movement of her lips, one is not tempted to do that in saying Matthew Weyburn!

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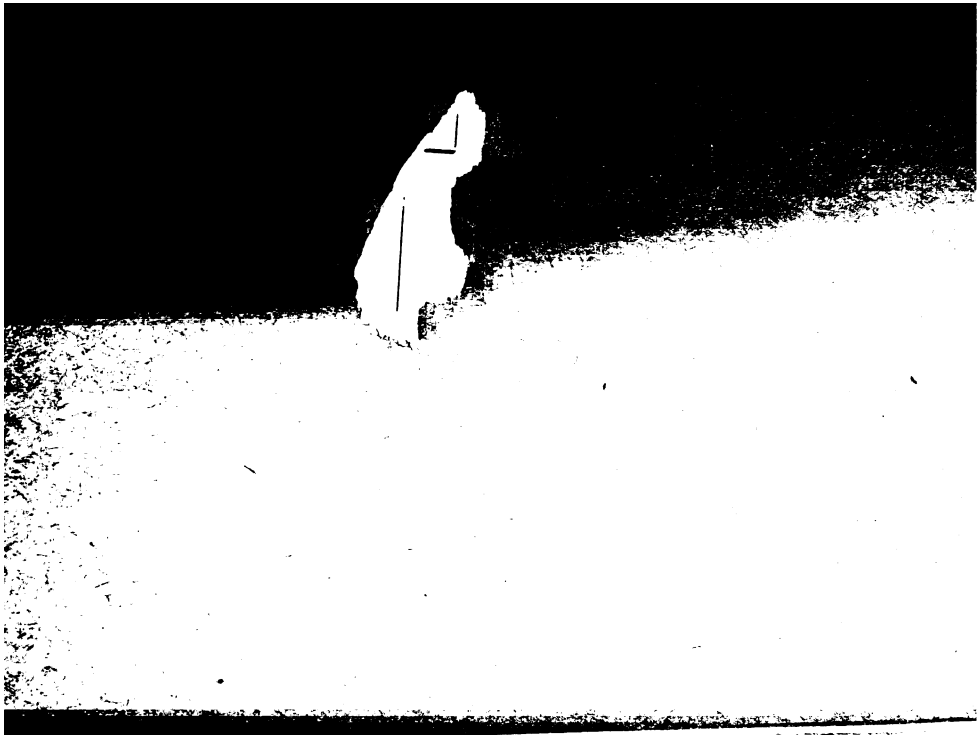
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